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THE TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT

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"Composition with Three Figures" (1912-13), in conté crayon by Henri Gaudier-Brzeska, can be seen in an exhibition (to be reviewed by the TLS) of his drawings and pastels and other works from the Ezra Pound collection at Anthony d'Offay, 9 Dover Street, New Bond Street, London W1 (September 19-October 16).

The Pearsall Smiths by Noël Annan

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THE TIMES

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SEPTEMBER 19, 1980

contents

The gene of independence

By Noël Annan

BARBARA STRACHEY:
Remarkable Relations
The Story of the Pearsall Smith Family
354pp. Gollancz. £9.95.
0 575 02823 8

Barbara Strachey has written a work of defiance. Year after year through their diaries, letters and biographers the Stephen and Strachey families have imposed upon us their view of their exogamous relations. Virginia Woolf so erased parthenogenesis that any creature who dared to marry a Stephen exposed itself to a bantling aside: even her nephews found as she was of them, undeniably suffered in her eyes from being Bells. And what could those who married Stracheys be but mere addenda? "The Stracheys are most strongly the children of their fathers, not of their mothers", one who married into that clan admitted. "It does not matter whom they marry." Yet here is a family which married into both Stephens and Stracheys and which could hand out as much as they took. What was more it was a family whose vitality descended through its women: the men were quietists, the women independent spirits never humbled at the worst of times even when they chose tigers as mates.

The Pearsall Smith family was American. Nor is that surprising. What other country in Victorian times produced women who were not only handsome, beautiful or fetching but independent, willing to engage with men on equal terms, frank, amused and amusing? England could produce marvellous birds of prey such as Florence Nightingale or Beatrice Webb, but the struggle to break the bars of their cage, secured to unsex them. Trollope, sensitive as always to the changes in upper-class life, sends the Palliser novels with the drama of the heir to the Duke of Omnium displeasing his father but in the end winning him round to his decision to marry an American. It is hardly surprising that Henry James—the connoisseur of how Americans obtained the entrée—became a somewhat wary friend of the family.

The Pearsall Smiths obtained their entrée through the evangelical movement. Hannah and Robert were both birthright Quakers from Philadelphia. But both broke out of that pure but narrow community, she moved by the Spirit, after marriage, to learn Greek and mathematics, he less concerned about the Truth than with communicating to other souls the turbulent religious emotions provoked by the study of the Bible and by hymn-singing. He became a famous preacher—and so did she. They left the Society of Friends; they were baptized; and Hannah discovered the Motherliness of God by which she meant among other things that one was entitled to believe in the larger Hope. But for her there was a corollary. If all sinners and not merely the Elect can be saved, is it not our duty to discover some infallible method of avoiding sin? Sanctification had to succeed Justification.

But there was an ominous strain in Robert Pearsall Smith's family. They produced manic-depressives. Life became somewhat hectic when his brother Horace entered what was called one of his happy moods; and Robert, whose demonic energy astonished his admirers, collapsed when a favourite son died in adolescence. During his convalescence Robert and Hannah set off to England and got swept into the evangelical revival which was at that time in full spate. But whereas other American revivalists such as Moody and Sankey were regarded as somewhat naive and vulgar, the manners of the Pearsall Smiths, whose children and cousins were going to East Coast colleges, opened the doors of the pious nobility: Lady Mount Temple invited them to hold meetings at Broadlands, Mr Gladstone conversed at breakfast about backsliding and all was set for Robert, whose powers as a preacher won widespread admiration, to give the keynote address as what was to be the first historic Keswick meeting. And then the blow fell. Some of his illustrations of the doctrine of Sanctification displayed unmistakable signs of Antinomianism.

What happened was sketched with characteristic period irony by his son, Logan, in one of the best autobiographies of a late Victorian childhood, *Unforgotten Years*. Sanctification has always been a deceptively pleasant doctrine. For if the justified sinner is armed against sin, what need he fear, now that temptation is a thing of the past, when he finds himself in situations in which frailer souls would fall and perish? Robert had been treated after his collapse by a Dr Foster who in his clinic spread the glad tiding that these sexual sensations, which had been supposed by the faithful to be manifestations of the Devil, in fact emanated from the Holy Ghost. The glad tidings were in fact a variant of that perennial temptation to the faithful which Gibbon describes in his fifteenth chapter. This time it was not the virgins of the warm climate of Africa who, declaring that they were invincible against the assaults of the flesh, permitted priests and deacons to share their bed with the result that insulted Nature sometimes vindicated her rights. This time those most assured that the Spirit was moving mightily among them, argued that if Christ was the Bridegroom of His Church was he not also the bridegroom of those within it, quickening within them the same stirrings as an earthly spouse might do? And if so, should not his ministers, as his representatives on earth, prepare the ladies in their flock for this spiritual awakening? Hannah had some inkling of what her husband was up to. "What then tells me of the petting of thy kind young deaconesses and thy enjoyment of it, is only another proof of the radical differences in our natures . . ." she wrote him. Rumours began to circulate; and then Robert was told that he must immediately cease preaching and under no account appear at Keswick. He fled shattered to Paris.

Whitall women: Mary, Hannah and Alys, 1898: from the book reviewed here.

It ill becomes our credulous times to mock. What are we to say when in our universities, which have supplanted the churches as the arbiters of morals, professors, luminaries of societies formed to defend academic freedom, encourage students to disrupt lectures by other scholars. Zeal is the parent of self-deception. It says much for Victorian tolerance, or at least a sensible propensity to sweep gossip under the carpet, that ten years later the family were back in London, received everywhere and finding lower willing to parade in the hall of Balliol at the wedding breakfast of their elder daughter Mary. The daughters now took over. Their father, like some brightly coloured but spent male insect, dwindled into obscurity, occasionally in a manic mood endangering his family's equanimity by investing fifty thousand dollars of their capital in dud mines, but glad to entertain, to the horror of their neighbours, Walt Whitman whom his daughter had discovered. Mary had inherited her father's gift for preaching—and also his antinomian tendencies. Her text was the duty of self-development. "If after giving it a fair trial, any particular task continues to be disagreeable, we can be sure it is not the right task for us."

Strange to say her mother did not condemn this brisk advocacy of hedonism. Although Hannah remained a Christian, her capacity for steam-rollering those who got in her way now took the form of seeing that nobody must thwart anything which a member of her family wanted. "She was", wrote her niece, "the most completely honest woman, grand and noble in many ways . . . only deluded in two things, her slavish devotion and real selfishness for her children and her Christianity". So whatever Mary did, Hannah stood by her. She argued herself into accepting that Mary had fallen in love with her Balliol beau, a Roman Catholic barrister, Frank Costelloe. She argued herself out of the indissolubility of marriage when Mary fell out of love with him and was willing to abandon her two daughters rather than be separated from her new love, Bernhard Berenson. Mary settled down to a lifetime of working, writing, bargaining, snuggling and quarrelling with BB, incapable of not having, whenever she saw fit, a flirtation (once with her brother-in-law) or an affair or two, but remaining for ever engaging to some, maddening to many, but her independent true self.

Her sister, Alys, was all that Mary was not: dutiful, devoted to good works and a beauty. A seventeen-year-old schoolboy fell in love with her at first sight. This was Bertrand Russell and in the years they were married he changed from a shy, unworldly, priggish and insecure boy into the familiar figure who left her for Ottoline Morrell. Unluckily Alys could not change. She had adopted all his ideas in an instant and remained hopelessly in love with him for the rest of her life, always believing that he would come back, bitterly regretting the days when he was unknown and writing *Principia Mathematica*, to her the greatest years of his life. Barbara Strachey conveys with great skill and truthfulness Russell's change of heart and his loathing of Hannah, for whom no words were too venomous, but she does not conceal the cold-blooded brutality with which this fabulous and ruthless egotist—it ill became him to call Hannah a hypocrite—threw Alys aside.

In so doing he was to make an enemy for life. Logan, when the family moved finally to London, decided to follow his Harvard career by taking a degree at Balliol. There he at last escaped from the overpowering female company of his youth and in that monastery of worldliness became a congenital bachelor. "My idea of a happy ending to a love story", he wrote, "is to begin at the engagement where the luck writer ends, and show how they escape from the storms and wild beasts back into the safe harbour of celibacy." It was at Balliol that he had met his best friend, Philip Morrell, but for his sister's sake he broke with the Morrells and made the most of a satisfying hate. He now devoted his life to antiques, making friends and quarrelling with them, and schooling himself to write perfect prose. He was quite right in thinking that in his final collection of Trivia, he had left a faint but indelible impression upon English letters which conveyed his humour, his feline malice, his disillusion—and his failings.

In the last days of the century Frank Costelloe died, having made a will to ensure that his daughters were brought up as Catholics and not by their mother. It was foiled, and Hannah got legal control of them. By now she was deep into politics and getting younger every day. What could be more modern than: "I am just off to attend a meeting to protest. What I am to protest about, I have no idea, but I feel in a tremendously protesting mood"? She enjoyed living up in her grandchildren and matched their zeal. "Yes, we did rejoice in the assassination of the Grand Duke, and we only hope there will be some more," was an odd sentiment from a birthright Quaker. However, she drew the line at murdering Mr Asquith and admitted her relief that her suffragette grandchild Ray did not belong to that wing of the movement whose only hostelries lay in deciding who was to be the martyr willing to mount the scaffold.

Meanwhile Mary was determined to turn her daughters into the cultured art-loving social successes that she had longed to be at their age. But she had at least met her match. Ray's indifference to clothes was of heroic proportions. She went to a fancy-dress ball as a potato sack, wearing a potato sack. Later in life when off to a grand party at Lady Astor's her own daughter warned her that her evening dress was inside out. "Pfool No one will notice" she said. Nobody did. She had found a congenial family in the Stracheys where no one paid the slightest attention to anything she said, did or wore; and eventually she proposed to Oliver Strachey as she put it, "between the sewage station and the lunatic asylum at Littlemore, a place so romantic that it couldn't be avoided". Oliver was a quietist who wished for an career other than that which he followed in the secret service as a cryptographer—satisfying but ill-paid. They suited each other.

Her sister, Karin, had a less happy life. As a child she wept that everyone loved Ray more than her, and five operations on her ear left her deaf and disfigured. She compensated by adopting a hearty gregarious manner of speech full of schoolboy slang, and she wept again at the cruelty of Bloomsbury who indicated in their spine-chilling manner that, wife of Adrian Stephen as she might have become, she was not one of them. She had, however, a Pearsall Smith brain. Tutored at Newnham by Bertrand Russell she got a distinction in the Tripos, the first ever to be awarded to a woman in philosophy! Banned from I Tatti by BB for their pacifism the Stephens decided both to become medically qualified in order after the war to practice as psychoanalysts. They would become so absorbed in argument about their cases that when they took up dingby sailing, for which they had no talent, they would run aground on mud flats and have to wait for the tide to lift them off next morning.

And so the book moves to the great-grandchildren. The Stephen girls remained paradigms of radicalism and unconventionality, the younger like her mother also being coached by Bertrand Russell in philosophy. The only grandson was unmistakably a Strachey in voice, manners and intelligence—he became the first professor of computer science at Oxford. But the favourite among the elder generation was the first, the author of this book, a clear descendant of Hannah, who despising the university laurels which now came almost of right to her family, opted for the university of life, sailed on a windjammer to Australia and contracted, as she puts it, a rash marriage with the mate who was a Finn. (Her brother Christopher used to say that this drew from Oliver and Ray after came anxious consultation a telegram urging delay which began "Marriage *rather* a serious thing".) Whatever else she inherited from the two sides of her family, she inherited their ability to construct a book and write admirable prose. No praise can be too high for the way she handles the masses of letters and sustains a narrative. Nor can any extracts give more than an indication of the richness of her dead-pan humour, her sympathy with even the most maddening of her kinsmen's foibles and her invariably just and sensible judgments.

Barbara Strachey ends by writing an elegy. We see in the Second World War and its aftermath the extinction of Hannah's and Mary's children. We see Mary, always in pain separated from BB who was in hiding in Nazi-occupied Italy, slowly dying and sending herself to sleep by reciting lists of people who had died before her. Ray had died before she did; and Karin and Adrian did not long survive her—Karin killing herself, as also did the dread family disease of manic-depression enveloping her. Logan, too, was its victim. During the 1930s he had written most of his best books and developed into a literary cleric forever looking for a young Samuel who would succeed him as the prophet of correct and elegant language. But his entertaining eccentricities turned bitter; he disinherited Bob Gathorne-Hardy who had sustained him for many years and he was on the point of turning out his sister, Alys, who kept house for him for thirty-five years, when he died, a cunning-looking old man whose teeth were worn away to the gums. Alys, who had prayed to be stricken with cancer when Russell left her and then, when she was, survived, Alys the last to say, then and thy, unselfish, living for others, was at last given a blessing. She had written to Russell to congratulate him on the OM—and he invited her to lunch. "For the first time since June 1952 I want to live. . . . Now I feel I shall freely see him again, and to love him freely is too wonderful." For the last year in her life they saw each other, she radiant with joy. "I am a lucky woman", she wrote, "and if I have suffered it has been worthwhile." She died unaware that he was intending to marry for the fourth time.

What will be left of the Pearsall Smith strain in the next century? Will the passion, the sober certainty of waking bliss, the wilfulness and independence of mind continue to be recognizable. Or will those old Quaker virtues become indistinguishable from the conventional self-righteousness of the intelligentsia? Who can say? But one characteristic may still descend through the female line. Cycling in Italy with Bertie, Alys, naturally attired in bloomers, heard an approving comment from a man in a town where they stopped: "Certe colonna di gamba!". Those columnar legs, which descended from Hannah through each generation to her great-grandchildren may in the end prove to be the most enduring and unmistakable family birthright.

Ordeals of solitude

By Victoria Glendinning

OLIVIA MANNING :
The Sum of Things
203pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £5.95.
0 297 77816 1

"What is lost, is lost. Things won't be returned to us", says Guy in Olivia Manning's new novel, which is dedicated in the memory of J. G. Farrell, who was "taken by the sea August 1979". One cannot forget, reading this book, that she herself did not live to see it published. *The Sum of Things* is the final volume of her Levant Trilogy (itself a continuation of the Balkan Trilogy) and the last we shall ever hear of Guy and Harriet Pringle and their wacky friends.

In an attempt to separate the novel from these bleak circumstances, one turns to technicalities. For example: there is clearly a problem in writing "series" novels in which the same characters recur, especially if, as in this case, each novel is designed to stand independently. How much characterization can be taken for granted? Must physical descriptions be given all over again?

Olivia Manning repeats an awful lot. The importunate Lister is described in the first volume of the Levant Trilogy, *The Danger Tree*, as having "a cherub's nose and a very small mouth covered by a fluffy moustache"; he wears "a pair of old brown corduroy trousers and a shirt that had faded to yellow, and only his cap and the crown on his shoulder indicated that he was not a civilian but an army officer". In *The Sum of Things* he has on "a faded khaki shirt and brown corduroy trousers and only his cap, worn at a jaunty angle, showed that he was an army officer". Further down the page his "round pink nose and fluffy fair moustache quivered", lest we forget. This is by no means the only example of such a wholebeasted reprise.

The major and constant theme of the trilogy is the uneasy relationship between Guy and Harriet, stranded in the Middle East during the Second World War. But there is in this final book one striking difference, and it is this difference that forces one to see the book as overwhelmingly concerned with disappearance, death, loneliness and loss: the two main characters are separated for most of the time. Everywhere friends rules each other, arrive too late, fail to be there when needed.

At the end of the second volume, *The Battle Lost and Won*, Guy and Harriet agree to part temporarily; when this last volume begins, Guy—still teaching English at the Institute in Cairo—thinks Harriet has sailed for England. Her ship is subsequently torpedoed in the Indian Ocean and she is presumed drowned. But Harriet, never boarded the ship. "Had we done that she was mourned for dead. Harriet was alive in the Levant." She has her adventures in Damascus, Baalbec and Beirut; she is lonely and misses Guy, even though he would not have been much of a companion: "They had never enjoyed the same things."

She falls in with two old friends who are now illicit lovers, Angela Hooper and Bill Castlebar, and is impressed by Castlebar's kindness to Angela. Harriet "admires people with intelligence and self-possession. Angela was beginning to realize that kindness, if you had the luck to find it, was an often rather undesirable quality." But during the ceremony of the Holy Fire at the Church of the Sepulchre in Jerusalem—the major set-piece of the novel—she realizes that she resists the unwanted kindness of moist, pink Lister, that "kindness is not enough". She also learns that Guy thinks she is dead: she must get back to him.

Whether Guy himself is kind is a moot point. It is his personality that throughout these books most exercises Harriet, and therefore the reader. "Guy's devotion to the outside world was more than I could bear", says Harriet. He gave himself to his friends, and took her for granted. Now, believing himself bereaved, he knows loneliness. He has friends everywhere, but "friends had lives of their own and were liable to disappear". He begins to feel that marriage was the only permanent relationship possible, at the same time as he learns, through the reactions of others, that Harriet might have had a life of her own away from him.

Both Guy and Harriet pass through ordeals of solitude—though neither is often alone—in which they assess themselves and each other. To make amends for past neglect Guy takes on the task of befriending the young officer Simon Boulderstone, whose own ordeal is paralysis by a bullet in the spine. But Simon is young and resilient; he will not need help for long. (Speaking of youth, it is a definite shock to be reminded that "Guy himself was not yet twenty-five" and Harriet even younger; their weary knowledge of each other and their obstinate, established personalities make them seem decidedly middle-aged.)

The person who does need Guy's help and support is the would-be actor Aidan, upset by Harriet's death and depressed by the war. But Guy spreads his universal friendship very thin, and cannot be bothered with Aidan for very long. Aidan shoots himself.

Aiden had wanted response, reassurance and affection, perhaps even love, and Guy had made it clear that he would give none of these things. He remembered that Harriet had accused him of taking up with inadequate people so, for the first time, they felt understand and appreciated. Then, their dependence becoming tedious, he would leave her to cope with them.

For Guy, in spite of his mourning, cannot change. After an emotional reunion with the living Harriet, he immediately snaps back into his old self. He cannot come to her celebration dinner because he must be at the Institute: "I have to meet some Egyptians, and give them a talk about self-determination." As Harriet says, "Nothing has changed."

But Harriet herself has changed, and Guy's very deficiencies now allow her self-determination — in think her own thoughts and see her own friends, even though like Guy she is reconciled to marriage: "In an imperfect world, marriage was a matter of making do with what one had chosen." This is wisdom perhaps—but the conventional wisdom. Hardly a crowd-stopper. A hostile witness might see Harriet as a self-absorbed person simply wanting more attention. Even a friendly witness might find her summing-up of her husband endlessly exciting: "Beneath his confident belief in himself, beneath his certainty that he was loved and wanted wherever he went, he was deprived. She saw the world as a reality and he did not."

One has to hang on the relations between these two because the author does. But this is not traditional "women's writing"; Olivia Manning writes sexlessly about sexual relationships, and the setting, the rackety wartime atmosphere and the documentary flavour of the Levant Trilogy cannot be overstressed. In Cairo the Manning world is that of journalists, truchers, diplomats, poets, officers on leave, good-time girls, racketeers, sometimes, but lively ones. The large cast have tea at Groppi's, high jinks on the Green Pyramid, drinks at the Anglo-Egyptian Union.

They drift from hotel to hotel, from whisky to arak to bouleggen gin, with the hopeless vitality of Evelyn Waugh characters. The names and ambiences of the great hotels of the Levant vital the narrative: the Dame at Kyrenia, the Cedars at Beirut, Mena House and Shepherd's in Cairo, the King David and the Semiramis in Jerusalem, the Cataract in Assuan, the Cecil in Alexandria—with the spice and sinister of war over all.

The Sum of Things adds up to sadness; it is a feat of resignation rather than resolution, and the happy couple in the book, the illicit lovers, are parted by a needless death that parallels the gratuitous horror with which the trilogy began. It is elegiac and theatrical; Harriet's supposed death is like a dress-rehearsal, and a stage image ends the book: "Like the tiny figures left on the stage at the end of a great tragedy, they had now in tidy up the ruins of war and in their hearts bury the noble dead". The "tiny figures" of Olivia Manning's fiction were love a society's destiny. A society's destiny that survives an author's lifetime becomes something more.

The poverty of language

By Craig Brown

NICHOLAS MOSLEY :
The Image Bird
186pp. Secker and Warburg. £5.95.
0 436 28846 X

It must amuse Nicholas Mosley that reviewers so often become tongue-tied when writing about his books. They generally admit to a certain befuddlement before plunging in to talk of the invention of the exuberance and pain of love, the trembling sense of detachment and so forth. In misunderstanding Mosley's work in this way, they are unconsciously demonstrating Mosley's principal and recurrent theme—the poverty of language as a means of understanding the world and the happiness within it.

Mosley's main characters are highly intelligent, self-conscious people whose constant struggle is to find a link between their interior lives and the world outside: they have an understanding of both, but can only connect them with the thin, frayed rope of words. *Image Bird* treats this struggle with a greater intensity than ever before: "Can you think of any work of European literature or of any other literature for that matter that's not to do with life being a disappointment? That's not trying to comfort people by saying how awful other people's lives are?" asks the teenage hero.

Oh I know—there are stories about animals, and fairy stories and campaigns for world peace, and trying to describe what human life's really like makes it out to be a successfully going concern? Something you'd be pleased to be part of? And yet it is, isn't it? Don't people want, after all, more to live than to die? Or at least with parts of themselves? Well this doesn't mean that all writers are fools or liars. It means that they're doing what language and language lets them do; with the limitations it imposes. Language is to do with protection; it's part of the system that filters what's coming in; it's suited to saying what things are not rather than what they are; it deals with disappointments. Even if people do know about life being a successful going concern they can't easily talk about this; it doesn't sound right; language is to do with parts, with stories that have a beginning and a middle and an end, and parts are properly sad, because they have limits. What is successful is to do with the whole.

Mosley never restricts himself to the narrowness of a safely literary discussion. Around the central boy, Bert, circle politicians and celebrities whose minds have been frozen by their need to build and inhabit plots—plots to explain themselves and other people, plots which cannot admit freedom of choice, plots which cannot admit to being plots. Bert lives with his uncle and aunt at 10 Downing Street. Throughout the book, strange things are happening: a gun fires, a woman catches fire, a man is assassinated. With the searching energy of a teenager, Bert attempts to understand these things and, more, to understand himself understanding them: "I had an impression that I had had once or twice before in my life; which was that I was not only looking down at myself in a mirror but was looking at myself looking this; and so I could tell myself where to go; but because I saw this exactly, but because I knew I had the ability".

Mosley's prose jitters on the page, as if such word is conscious that it could be placed elsewhere in the sentence. Similarly, Bert communicates with himself in the characteristic, hesitant Mosley style, knowing that for each thought another is present and that for each direct speech there are many others—some entirely contrary—to take its place: "

Sheila shouted Oh God Oh Jesus Christ!

She was holding her head and was rolling about on the bedsprings.

Dr Anders might say—And you still didn't think he was her lover?

I could say—Or didn't mind?

I said 'Look, it doesn't matter—'

I thought—But that is condescending: shouldn't I really hit her?

To save her from being the victim she both wants and doesn't want to be?

Mosley has an uncanny ability to remember and scrutinize the process of thought being transformed into external or internal speech and, like a scientist, he knows that the presence of observation alters the observed, so that Bert recounts people's actions and speech in a way that is necessarily stilted, as if the wind had changed and these ordinary people making faces had been petrified in all their oddness. The peculiarity of the roles people adopt when they see life as a plot like stylo of the narrator. Through his devotion to similes Bert continually suggests for himself worlds not chained by plots, worlds differing, open and apart. Other people's minds grow like cages: "But what has happened to that bird that was once behind Uncle Bill's eyes; has it become trapped, and is dying there?"

Mosley's last work, *Constantine Peverice*, was almost impossibly obscure. *Image Bird* is the first of a planned series of interlocking novels, each relating to one of the six characters in the *Constantine Peverice* plays. It is a much clearer, more self-assured book than its predecessor. But has a thought: "Life is held in a riddle; like a universe; like an atom". It looks as if each of the novels will add a new perspective on the riddle, in much the same way as each of the short stories in his book *Impossible Objects* illuminated the whole. Mosley's concern with extending the dimensions of self-consciousness is taken to the brink near the end of this book, when the main character seems set to meet the man who wrote him. Mosley has started one of the very few genuinely experimental projects in modern English writing; while others cling to naturalism as if it is the artist's passport, he strives to communicate the real presence of optimism, its enthusiasm, its secrecy, its apparent incompatibility with the language.

In Slave Wilson's *Beeder's War* (256pp. Macmillan. £5.95. 0 333 27121 1) ex-drug dealer Jack, on the run from a coup *unfixed* after a slight misunderstanding, over a hundred pounds of hashish, goes through some hairy experiences in Kabul, Crete and L.A. before falling up in a Norfolk farmhouse with a Vietnam vet, a girl and a hostage and daring the leaves to come on. Which they do. Action, when it comes, is good, with an exemplary climactic confrontation, but the pace is too often slowed as Jack, puffing on a joint, ruminates on the meaning of life.

In Frank Dickens's *A Curl Up and Die Dog* (152pp. Peter Owen. £5.50. 0 7206 0573 3) former racing cyclist Dicko, who lost his chance of a medal at the Rome Olympics by tangling with a mammoth Swedish shot-putter, is watching the world cycle championships at San Sebastian, Spain, when he gets entangled in an imbroglio together with that same Swede, his beautiful blonde wife, and a defecting Russian velocipedist. Good, swift-pedalling story with plenty of bike lore—though cycling could, with advantage, have played a larger part in the fable. And did Frank Dickens, who appears to feel some kinship with his hero/narrator, to judge by the choice of name, really intend to portray him as such a lout?

T. J. Binyon

above-average film.

Seeing the sights

By Carol Rumens

PETER GILES :
A Monster Unto Many
170pp. Frederick Muller. £6.50.
0 584 10014 1

The supernatural is not the only material for a modern novelist, lost of film producers and script writers stands between him or her and a freshly imagined view of the subject. Current taste seems to demand that ghost stories be brief stories, but the past-haunted genre is more likely to yawn the vomit at gruesomeness prompted more too often.

Then there are the perennial problems of craft: the building of tension, the timing of surprises, the sustaining of plausibility. Peter Giles has not quite got it right. His story is as stuffed with symbols and "phenomena" as a sweet-shop with calories, the characters worked out and already of the pre-war past (train journey in particular) evoked with a musty sense of period. But the susceptible reader is more likely to shudder at unfortunate echoes like "Hitchcockiana" than at Giles's intimations of the powers of darkness.

The novel's framework is a journey which Derek Hughes has found troubled him his life: a dark book about the life of Hughes. Planning a family holiday that himself, he decides to pursue his unknown predecessor's sound of sightseeing and duly sets off with his wife Barbara and only son Jamie. But already the spirit of summer fun has been somehow can have occurred which Derek has interpreted as menacing. The author seems deliberately to force model choice of holiday his readers into a false sense of security.

Overwriting is one of the problems. Here is Derek observing a rather common phenomenon, "the smoking cigarette climb to him. He moved as if on step back, but he did so only reluctantly. He saw the coats his fort made floating over the particles spinning round in the sunlight, the water rushing swirling in to take complete possession. He watched bubbles on both prints were filled and the spot darken. Soon they lay destroyed under the swirling salt and he was free". This is a bit portentous and suggests, against the intention of the story, a character too easily prey to morbid imaginings.

Derek's demon (it is fair to reveal, since the author doesn't keep us guessing very long) is a teen-aged schoolboy. Perhaps this explains the Lower Third nature of many of the phenomena he evokes (rotting jellyfish, phlegm, etc), or perhaps the writer is confusing horror with disgust. The genuinely shocking (such as the road advancing behind the retreating in Derek's rear driving mirror) is there too, but just left in the general melee.

A ghost story needs the ordinary, and it needs, I think, a set of complex emotional relationships in the foreground from which the past can draw its strength to terrorize. This is why Garner's *The Ont Scrolls* is more chilling, and more lasting, than most "adult" horror fiction; why Amis's preposterous Green Man suggests much greater sexual malevolence than the superficially more believable Geoffrey Peter Giles duly sets up a sexual triangle, but the emotions involved are dealt with half-heartedly, and the female characters are rather dimly evoked. Derek's wife, for example, is a patronized creature who vacillates between sharing her husband's intuitiveness and deriding it, sensitive, it seems, only when it suits the author.

Nevertheless, the narrative does succeed in building up more pace towards the climax, and several scenes show a vein of black comedy that fillet should perhaps evolve further. He is a painter as well as a writer and the book is a mass of visual effects. Strongly cast and edited, it could be the stuff of an

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Knowing better and doing worse

By Robin Robbins

C. S. FERNS :
Aldous Huxley : Novelist
240pp. Athlone Press. £15.
0 485 11194 2

ALDOUS HUXLEY :
Moksha
Writings on Psychedelics and the Visionary Experience 1931-1963
Edited by Michael Horowitz and Cynthia Palmer
280pp. Clarke and Windus. £12.50.
0 7011 2319 2

Characterized by Elizabeth Bowen as "a sort of perpetual clever nephew" and by Jocelyn Brooke as a kind of wicked uncle, Aldous Huxley seems now more like a favourite aunt—largely benevolent but sheltered from a world for whose problems he offered sweeping answers, volubly and uncritically retailing ideas picked up from the latest books, softening all contradictions in a religious mist, and repeating himself over and over again. This last habit, usually deferred till dotage, took firm root in the writer's youth: the reclusive scientist suggested by Scogan in *Crome Yellow* as one of the subjects for a book to be called "The Lives of Queer Men" (what a mercy Edith Sitwell thought of a better title) reappears fleshed out in *Antic Hay* and *Point Counter Point*; men whose love-lives have gone awry fall off cliffs in *Eyeless in Gaza* and *Island*; those who are even less admirable in their sexual relationships, such as Myra Viveash and Burlap, discordantly evoke our compassion by mourning dead lovers. These, with the *femme fatale* bits of Nancy Cunard in Myra Viveash, Lucy Tantamount, and Beba, counterbalanced occasionally by a mystical doctor who has to be of Scottish extraction, are the familiar company of the typical Huxleyan hero, weak, lustful, guilty, disloyal, partially intelligent, timid—he called Gumbril, Bidlake, Beavis, or Will Farnaby.

To some extent, Huxley's self-confinement to his little bit (two inches wide) of bakelite reflects a sincere preoccupation with the neuroses of his own narrow section of the human race, convinced of its superior capabilities yet forced to see the nullity of its achievements. The theme of knowing better but doing worse—expressed for both hedonists and ascetics by Ovid and St Paul—recurrently preoccupies men such as Anthony Beavis and his faded avatar, Will Farnaby. The problem is big enough to justify the novelist's lifetime of attempts to solve it.

There is, however, a more trivial end, for the story-teller, more destructive sort of repetition. However frankly the writer may avow that his novels are novels of ideas, if the narrative which is his chosen vehicle does not work *per se*, it collapses under the ideas (not because they are particularly weighty), and involves them in its ruin. The plausibility of Huxley's tales is frequently destroyed when we recognize stage-props wheeled on from a previous production.

From *Point Counter Point* the description of the effect of Webley's oratory is echoed in *Brave New World*,Ary Scheiffer as a yardstick of sentimental insincerity crops up again in *Eyeless in Gaza*. From novel to novel important characters have similar, limited tastes in painters, music, perfumes; their irresponsible and destructive love-affairs are conducted in pink bedrooms. When Huxley Queries—otherwise perhaps Huxley's most solidly memorable secondary character in a nineteenth-century way, by Chadband out of Casaubon—has his sordid bit on the side, the girl has to be called Gladys, and to perform in Bloomsbury; when Anthony Beavis really goes to the dogs it is with (surprise, surprise) a girl called Gladys in Bloomsbury.

At least, while narrative credibility is destroyed, the scheme of value-judgments in this last instance remains constant. Given that the moral colouring of Huxley's characters is blocked in so simply, it is not always easy to know what responses to allow when characteristics, ideas, or circumstances are repeated: Sidney Quarles's posture in conversation is memorably described as howitzer-like, appearing to shoot his words over the listener's head; when this description is reapplied to Arnold Bennett, the question arises, "is Huxley implying that Bennett had some or all of Sidney Quarles's accompanying traits?", and one has to refer back to what Huxley said about Bennett in letters thirty years earlier to deodorize the description. The offence caused by this rejigging of fragments of real people was, of course, flagrant and notorious in the case of Burlap and Middleton Murry. It arises from that imaginative poverty cogently chastized by C. D. Leavis as "the nemesis of the novelist who has chosen to resort to books instead of to life for his raw material".

C. S. Ferns's new defence, *Aldous Huxley : Novelist*, is an ingenious performance on a tightrope strung between Wayne Booth's placing of *Island* in "that other, non-Leavisian great tradition"—works like *Gulliver's Travels*, *Candide*, *Rasselas*, *Erewhon*, using fictional devices to provoke thought", and Bernard Bergonzi's conventional preference for something more like the work of James, Conrad, Joyce, and Virginia Woolf. Noting that this latter type of critic is least grudging about those of Huxley's novels—*Point Counter Point*, *Eyeless in Gaza*—which approach most nearly the complexity, realism, and sophistication of the modernists' holy quaternity, Dr Ferns contrasts the popular preference for *Brave New World* and *Island*, and sets out "to find a critical approach which offers an extension rather than a contradiction of the ordinary reader's".

In justifying Huxley's use of fiction to popularize ideas, Ferns does not commit himself to any rash praise of the ideas themselves. On the early volumes of essays he casts as cool an eye as anyone. Of the discussion of war in *Beyond the Mexique Bay* he remarks:

> Rational his suggestions may be, but they are at the same time informed by a serious kind of silliness, which perhaps reflects just how far his rational approach is out of touch with the realities of the subject he is discussing... 'a World Psychological Conference'... The cure for war is something to be imposed on mankind by the experts, by those capable of seeing what is best for their fellow men.

The patronizing paternalism discerned here is also deployed as it appears in the hare-brained advocacy of "the supreme necessity of sexual continence" in *Ends and Means*, and in the elitist, equally scatty laudation in *The Perennial Philosophy*—that pot-pourri of comparative hallucination—of "a small theocentric minority working along quite other lines than the anthropocentric majority".

What Dr Ferns does approve of is what he sees as a developing seriousness, beginning with *Antic Hay*'s "exploration of the nature of our perception of reality". Of course, from *Jesting Pilate* through the drug experiences to *Island* with its repetition of the phrase "in a Pickwickian sense", Huxley was skirting the jungles of ontology and epistemology into which sharper minds were cutting clearer paths. It is truer, perhaps, to say of *Antic Hay*, as Dr Ferns does of *Point Counter Point*, that it is particular philosophies of life (or rather, in *Antic Hay*, hardly-conscious attitudes and habits of action) and the lifestyles that follow from them, which are under examination.

To reduce the prominence usually accorded to *Point Counter Point* and *Eyeless in Gaza* by comparison with *Island*, Dr Ferns attacks on two main fronts. Has these in the two novels' novels an exaggerated distaste for physical pleasures such as food, drink, and sex, already present in the early comedies, but here become almost pathologically obsessive. This he contrasts with the acceptance in the last novel of unpossessive love-making, of the beauty of the body (as long as it isn't Murugan's). Huxley finally escapes from his "Swiftian revulsion from the flesh", and instead of advocating a despairing withdrawal from a hopeless world into "a vague and joyless ascetism", comes to terms with the unpleasantness of reality—"lust and jealousy, fear and guilt, pain and death"—so that he can also embrace its positive attributes, humankind at large instead of that theocentric minority, personal relationships rather than isms, direct physical pleasures, not just art and ideas.

More central to Huxley's status as novelist is the problem of his characterization. Here Dr Ferns has some incisive things to say on how, in a "critics' choice" novel such as *Point Counter Point*, while the characters may individually be convincing, their realism is counteracted by the obvious schematization of the novel, by the way in which each one fills a frame in Rampion's rogues' gallery. And since Huxley so arbitrarily correlates a character's personal qualities with the rank of his philosophy of life in Rampion's scale of merit, the final, unintended implication is a sort of fatalism: personality and outlook are a fused and unchangeable whole, so why preach to the predestined? In *Eyeless in Gaza* Huxley has progressed so far as to create a character who does change, but even so, Anthony Beavis's conversion to the higher truths of pacifism, mysticism, and colonic lavage is an accidental, momentaneous, and invisible as to leave the reader himself unregenerate. Nor is the supposed goodness of guru or convert, Miller or Beavis, the earlier Calamy, or the later Propter or Rontini, shown convincingly at work: as Ferns observes, they "are so concerned with the mechanics of being good, the amount of good they actually do rarely seems to make much impact on the hopelessly imperfect worlds which they inhabit".

A symptom of this, stemming of course from Huxley's own incapacity, is the dodging in *Eyeless in Gaza* and *After Many a Summer* of the practical questions begged by pacifism, that evasion which in *Island* delivers up Pala to Rendang, and which, Ferns admits, seems "like sheer irresponsibility". Another variety of the implausibility that vitiates *Eyeless in Gaza* may be seen in that blood-bomb, the *canis ex machina* (how drearily often, right to the end, Huxley uses the death of an animal, usually a dog, as his token of the Eternal Horror): its ludicrous improbability makes it too easily discounted to bear that tremendic significance which sparks off Beavis's spiritual quest.

All these strains between the needs of the narrative and the writer's intentions are shown by Ferns to become more destructive after *Eyeless in Gaza*. The clue to the relative success (or least with the common tendency of *Brave New World* and *Island*, it is argued, is that in these works Huxley abandons the pretence of a realistic portrayal of the society his readers know better than he does, so that "throughout *Brave New World* maintains a level of inventiveness, excitement, and energy which his realistic fiction never approaches". In *Island* the intentions and expectations of writer and reader are so clearly not those of the novel of character and action that "Huxley's failures of execution remain incidental: they do not affect the reader's involvement in the consideration of his ideas". (Dr Ferns does not notice that the author himself, ironically, was "disturbed by the low ratio of story to exposition". He gets away with the exposition here because, as with the attacks on the flagellant theology of Jews and Christians, and on the Western nuclear family, it is on target and amusing: in contrast to Philip Quarles's notebook and Beavis's muddled essays, tedious pretexts for flying prematurely constructed kites without owning up to who really holds the string.)

But if Huxley is to be let off the hook as a novelist because, as a man of ideas, we need expect of him only rudimentary narrative skills, he must face judgment as a thinker. It was C. D. Leavis again who trenchantly characterized his apparent learning as superficial and secondhand, worked up and extended with dubious generalizations and precarious hypotheses. Even within his own works the history of these acquired ideas is a devious one: just as the novelist recycles the components of his products, so the ideologue's bits and pieces are infinitely remodelled. Edmund, as Ferns observes, encapsulates all Huxley's most characteristic preoccupations from *Those Barren Leaves* onwards. Yet even such a trivial detail as the pragmatic Hindu classification of fish as "sea-vegetable" had appeared in *Jesting Pilate*. *Island*'s

Formations

(for Gloude and Tsill Gandelman)

"If you, priest of God, whosver you may be, are so learned ... that you find my style boorish, I yat implore you, do not destroy what I have written."
Gregory, Bishop of Tours (quoted by Auerbach, *Mimesis*, p. 93)

Fig, date, and balsam, they fringe
two pools : two shields resting
in Judah's desert,—gazelles hurtled
by fear, by fear checked.

Fig, gazelle, shield—words to do
with water whose desert the asp,
that minute king, grins with and flickers.
We wait for water to be at rest.

We are enough for Judah, the shields
would suffice us for ever. His psalm plucks
its sojourns of praise, and fills
my jealous mouth with His name.

He made the wild places, I, too, form songs.

Jon Silkin

seriously conceived "neurotheology" echoes Gumbril's whimsical musings in chapel; Vijaya's and Dr Robert's claims as manual workers to fulfil Gumbril's fantasy of getting to know "what it was like to be a mill-girl, a duerman, an engine-driver", exorcising the intellectuals' childish incapacity for real life agonized over in almost every succeeding novel.

Occasionally, this recycling seems to land our favourite aunt on her head: the voice of the blimp who concludes that Myra Viveouli is talking to herself in the street because she has taken to drugs—"Most of them did nowadays. Vicious young women: Lesbians, drug-fiends, nymphomaniacs, dipsos—thoroughly vicious nowadays, thoroughly vicious"—is heard loud and clear through Huxley himself (who meanwhile has taken to drugs) in a lecture of 1956 in which not only does he condescend to express "compassion for those who blind themselves by excessive egotism, by alcohol and parties and TV", but launches into a fantastic extravaganza about pop music:

> From the potlatch and the corroboree to the latest outburst of "rock 'n' roll", the manifestations of herd poisoning exhibit the same subhuman characteristics. At their best, such performances are merely grotesque in their subhumanity; at their worst, they are both grotesque and horrible. One thinks, for example, of the festivals of the Syrian goddess, in the course of which, under the maddening influence of herd poison and priestly suggestion, men castrated themselves and women incerated their breasts. One thinks of Greek mænadism, with its savage dismemberment of living victims.

More important is the apparent collapse into wide-open credulity. In Crome Yellow Mrs Wimbush tells Denis to believe because it makes life so amusing and exciting—"All that happens means something; nothing you do is ever insignificant. It makes life so jolly you know." Her pet, Mr Barbecue-Smith, makes a fat living by publishing Paradoxes and Platitudes in capital letters, such as "Seeing is Believing. Yes, but Believing is also Seeing. If I believe in God, I see God, even to the things that seem to be evil." When Huxley himself bursts into capitals with uncannily similar unverifiable observations in *Time Must Have a Stop*, *The Doors of Perception*, and *Heaven and Hell*, we might wish that a mischievous undergraduate had been lying in wait to put such apostasy into his mercilessly satirical novel. Yet this was actually no apostasy: Ferns notes the apparent lapses of mysticism and contemplation in *Those Barren Leaves*; he could have gone back further, to the undergraduate of 1915 who said in a letter soon (after his brother's death): "One does feel tremendously that one is part of a larger soul, which embraces everything." It looks as though Mrs Wimbush and Barbecue-Smith were not merely extraneous minor targets but embodiments of Huxley's own inclinations temporarily kept at bay.

Dr Ferns posits as an important question how far a significant change of attitude in Huxley's later works can be attributed to his experiments of psychedelic drugs. Here again, the interest, though not the practice, was of long standing: in *Point Counter Point*, thirty years before *Heaven and Hell*, he lifts alcohol, soma, hemp, peyotl, and musbrooms, as consciousness-altering substances. Though this reference is not picked up by its editors, *Moksha*, a gathering of writings on mescalin and LSD and the sensations they produced, together with more general meditations on the possible positive function of drugs in society, from the collected works and letters and from less accessible places, might shed more light on Dr Ferns's question.

Though presumably produced with the opposite intention, *Moksha* shows Huxley at his least impressive. Usefully, it chronicles the change from the absolute condemnation in 1952 of "chemical methods of self-transcendence" to the announcement in 1955 that mescalin "seems to do for each person what each person needs". We also see Huxley pleased to style himself in that year "the man whose book was largely responsible for the great increase of interest in mescalin", then in 1956 responsibly urging that "the matter should be discussed, and the investigations described, in the relative privacy of learned journals, the decent obscurity of moderately highbrow books and articles", but only two years later throwing such caution to the (financial?) winds in the *Saturday Evening Post*: "Thus a person who takes LSD or mescalin may suddenly understand—not only intellectually but organically, experientially—the meaning of such tremendous religious affirmations as 'God is love', or 'Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him'."

We see too both a very worldly and a gullible Huxley—"when a partner in J. P. Morgan is impressed by this sort of thing, it must be pretty impressive"; "Deamer is an amino-alcohol and is thought to increase the production of acetylcholine within the body, and thereby to increase the activity and effectiveness of the nervous system. The man who takes the new pill needs less sleep, feels more alert and cheerful, thinks faster and better—and all at next to no organic cost, or any rate in the short run"—just as ready to parrot and be manipulated by big business as any of the edmoss he so condescendingly pities. In a lecture in 1961 he contradicts himself from moment to moment in support of the point in hand, claiming that visionary experiences are less common because drug lists improved, but soon afterwards that they are more common than we know because people don't talk about them. The dangers of the drug he has enjoyed are airily dismissed—it tends "to accumulate in the liver"; "There are plenty of people to whom a few hours is hell . . . could be a world of good." The solution for the troubles of the world is an inambitantiel wheat whipped up from ill-assimilated pharmacology in California or as were the panaceas for pre-war society dispensed from a villa in the South of France, by a man who had fled in helpless dismay from the misery of the Durban slums, coalfields: "That famous revival of religion will come about as the result of biochemical studies. . ."

This intellectual was a man for whom, to amend Goethe's phrase, the word was too fruitful an unashamed generalist for all too vulnerable to delusion among strangely uncritical specialist hedgehogs. He wryly noted that "alas, the revelations of alcohol are not altogether reliable"; nor were the emotions induced by drugs any more objective or truly revelatory. For the half-convinced, a study of Huxley's life and reading will show that what he asserted to have conveyed who consciousness "from somewhere out there" in the "Reality of Mind-at-Large" corresponds remarkably with long-standing convictions and with what he had already read and regurgitated, such as Evans-Wentz's *Tibetan Book of the Dead*. Even the feeling of a huge significance in ordinary objects had been expressed before through Philip Quarles. If, however, the relaxation of that spinsterly primness, the touches of common sense, and the warm acceptance of humanity which are to be found in *Island* really stem from the experience under drugs of a "fundamental All-Rightness", albeit misinterpreted, we can only be grateful. Putting *Moksha* aside and picking up *Antic Hay*, *Point Counter Point*, or *Island* again, we may conclude Dr Ferns's case for "someone worth reading, worth arguing with, worth thinking about—above all, someone whose work deserves a better fate than being sacrificed on the altar of an inappropriate critical theory".

Titmice and tradition

By Nicholas Davies

JOHN TYLER BONNER:
The Evolution of Culture in Animals
216pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press. £8.10.
0 691 08250 2

Every one of us has acquired information from two distinct sources during our lifetime. We have inherited genetic information from our parents, transmitted via sperm and egg. We have also acquired information by learning. This kind of information, passed on from brain to brain in the form of ideas and accumulating as knowledge and tradition, is what we call culture.

There are some similarities between genetic and cultural evolution. Just as differences in survival and reproduction bring about evolutionary change through natural selection of alternative genes, so differences in the rate of imitation and learning bring about cultural evolution through the selection of alternative ideas. However, there are important differences between the two processes. Genetic information is inherited by an individual just once in its lifetime from parents, while ideas are acquired continuously and from many individuals. It may take many generations for a new mutant gene to become fixed in a population whereas a new idea can spread very rapidly—we may all be whistling the same popular tune within a few weeks of its invention.

In our own species, the word "culture" conjures up the rich world of art and literature, of science, fashion and religion. For many, therefore, it may come as a surprise to open John Tyler Bonner's book and discover that much of it is devoted to animals like bacteria, insects and birds. But cultural transmission of information is not unique to man. A few decades ago some British tinmice discovered that by visiting our dairysteps in the early morning and pecking at the aluminium-foil caps on the milk bottles, they could help themselves to the breakfast cream. This habit seems to have been invented in one locality and has since spread throughout the country by imitation to become part of titmouse culture. Similarly, the songs of some species of birds are not inherited genetically but rather by imitation of those of neighbours; an individual may make a mistake in the copying and suddenly invent a new song type, and this cultural mutation may then be passed on to future generations. As a final example of animal culture, that genius among macaque monkeys, a young female named Imo invented the idea of washing sand from sweet potatoes before eating them (which saves getting grit in between the teeth); her new idea spread through the monkey colony and is now maintained by tradition.

However, the bulk of Professor Bonner's book is devoted to examples of animal culture. This is hardly surprising as there are so few well-studied cases and these are mentioned only briefly in a dozen or so pages in one of the final chapters. Instead, the main theme is the biological basis of the capacity for culture. Although we may not find culture in tiny organisms like bacteria, nevertheless we can see in them the simple response systems that, elaborated in more complex animals, form its basis. Bonner suggests three important stages in the evolution of culture, emphasizing that each one is adaptive in its own right. First of all, the ability to move enabled animals to respond quickly to the environment through behaviour rather than morphological change, as when motile bacteria swim up chemical gradients towards richer food supplies. Secondly, the evolution of a centralized nervous system brought about more effective and controlled movement, enabling animals to respond to a greater variety of environmental changes and exhibit more complex behaviour. Finally, genes that coded for larger and better brains were favoured during evolution because these gave rise to individuals that could respond more efficiently in complex and changing environments. Animals were thus capable of sending and receiving cultural information, of inventing new ideas that could enable them to find food, mates and prey, to live more efficiently. As Bonner puts it, our information processing machine, the genome, gave rise to another, the brain, which made it a more efficient individual, but able to perpetuate its genes in future generations.

By developing the story through these three stages, with detailed descriptions of the structure and evolution of brain and genome, of social behaviour, Bonner emphasizes culture in man as an elaboration of the same processes we see in our animal ancestors, rather than something new and unique. Many readers, however, the book will come to an end just as it begins to get exciting. It leaves many important questions unanswered. Is culture adaptive in the sense of increasing the reproductive success of those that practise it? Are differences in culture between groups correlated with ecological differences or do they merely represent different culturally arbitrary styles, rather like driving on the left or against the right-hand side of the road? How does culture develop in individuals? Is there development of group culture?

Although many of the theories and examples in this book are revised from earlier writings by R. D. Alexander, Richard Dawkins and E. O. Wilson, the clear way in which Professor Bonner arranges the ideas and his new emphasis will contribute to the growing and fruitful interactism between biology, anthropology and sociology. Often the arrangement of what we already know is as stimulating as a completely new theory. After all, it is simply a combination of two behaviour patterns—carrying food and walking down to the water that led man to wash her first potato and so start a whole new tradition.

The simple life

By Kenneth Mellanby

JOHN LISTER-KAYE
The Seeing Eye: Notes of a Highland Naturalist
275pp. Allen Lane. £7.95.
0 7139 1306 1

The publishers describe this as "the story of a naturalist's struggle to establish a nature study centre in the Highlands of Scotland". That indeed is part of the story, but essentially this is the autobiography of an impecunious and moderately aristocratic young man (the eldest son of the seventh baronet, and the son-in-law of a count) and the twenty-third to his thirty-third year. We are given all the details of his courtship and marriage, long and harrowing accounts of life in undistinguished buildings in remote locations, of the unpalatability of many contractors, of the vagaries of his motor vehicles and of his friends and acquaintances. This is not as tedious as one might have feared, for the book is well written, with perception and humour; but is it really of sufficient interest to be recorded for posterity?

The book's chief virtue is its admirable and evocative descriptions of the Highlands and other parts of northern Scotland, of a trip to Swedish Lapland, and of encounters with animals on land and in the water. There is nothing particularly original or unusual about it, and little by way of a contribution to science or natural history which has not been observed before and reported with greater detail and accuracy, but those who are familiar with the various places described and their wildlife will be pleasantly reminded of their own experiences. John Lister-Kaye can with truth claim to have "the seeing eye", as one highlander commented on the activities of a party of his students. He certainly has the ability to observe the whole spectrum of birds, mammals, and other animals and plants in the countryside in a way many better qualified, more specialist scientists, who are blind to everything but their own particular group, may be unable to achieve. I know from experience how selective our sightings may be: thus I see the signs of mole activity in almost every habitat, while my companions, who are rewarded with other forms of wildlife, are unaware of the presence of moles anywhere.

Lister-Kaye went originally to Scotland to work with Gavin Maxwell shortly before Maxwell's death. This left him stranded, for he did not care to return to some ill-specified career in industry. He was fortunate in having friends who lent him cottages in remote parts of the Highlands, where he lived the simple life, observed nature and wrote his first book, *The Wild Island*. More or less by chance he became involved in showing the countryside and its wildlife to visitors, and he then decided to try to establish his own field-study centre. Most of those who came under his care will no doubt enjoy reading about his side of the enterprise, but his candid descriptions of the experiences and humiliations of some of his victims, who will be easily recognized by their companions and friends, may deter the sensitive and sensitive from trusting themselves to his guidance lest they should appear in another of the books he is known to write.

The prey fight back

By Jeremy Cherfas

J. L. CLOUDSLEY-THOMPSON:
Tooth and Claw
Defensive Strategies in the Animal World
252pp. Dent. £9.95.
0 460 04360 9

J. L. Cloudsley-Thompson is a prolific writer on zoology. Its latest book he sets out to correct what he sees as an imbalance in our perception of the natural world. He claims that we have paid too much attention to aggression and predation and have neglected defence; to counteract this he has made an impressive catalogue of the bizarre and fascinating things animals do to protect themselves from the unwelcome attention of predators.

There doesn't seem to be a trick imaginable that is not used by some animal or other. The bombardier-beetle mixes reactive chemicals within its abdomen to produce a boiling-hot spray that it can aim with considerable accuracy. Many caterpillars munch happily on poisonous plants, adopting the plant's ineffectual defences (ineffectual against caterpillars, though not against mammals) to make themselves poisonous. Bats hunt by sonar—and some of the moths they hunt produce jamming sounds which confuse the bats.

It is salutary to know that so many of man's defensive strategies crop up also in the animal world, where they have been produced not by thought and engineering but by adaptation and natural selection. Sometimes man has copied nature precisely, as when he developed effective camouflage for ships at sea, but more often the similarities result from there being one good solution to a particular problem. The predator poses the problem and the prey solves it. Those predators that pose the toughest problems, and those prey that produce the best solutions, succeed in their respective arms races, for in addition to the direct struggle between hunter and hunted the predators compete with one another to find prey and the prey compete with one another to avoid being found. *Tooth and Claw* focuses on the neglected party in this never-ending struggle.

The melodious modulator

By Roy Fuller

GERALD BORDMAN:
Jerome Kern: His Life and Music
438pp. Oxford University Press. £9.50.
0 19 502649 7

On the radio programme "Desert Island Discs" recently, Stephen Sondheim said that Jerome Kern was "the Mozart of the musical theatre". No doubt the observation was made off the cuff but it was surely wide of the mark. Of course, Kern could turn out the brief piece appropriate to the occasion and the period (from the pre-1914 waltz to the post-1918 foxtrot), but his hallmark was it take the word from a rather unfriendly critic quoted in the present volume, the reference lost as I write) lugubriousness, a most unMozartlike trait—Rachmaninovian rather. Mr Sondheim would have been nearer the bullseye if he had said "the Schubert of the musical theatre". In view of Kern's fondness for and mastery of modulation. An aged relative of mine, listening to an orchestra on the wireless, once ruminatively remarked: "I didn't know Schubert wrote Ol' Man River." What had happened was that the announcement had been "a selection from *Showboat*", which the old person had misheard, though quite content, before the familiar "dah dah di-di" aroused suspicions, to credit the melodies of that musical play to the nineteenth-century master's account.

"Our greatest melodist", Gerald Bordman calls Kern, in his "Prologue", speaking as an American. He, too, I believe is wrong, for that title is surely George Gershwin's. Nevertheless, Kern's achievement, though historically important, as I have already hinted, has its abundantly transcendental side—in a sense more extraordinary than Gershwin's because spread over a longer period. When a popular tune survives from the early part of the century it ordinarily does so via pubs' pre-closing-times, and geriatric sing-songs. Kern's "They Didn't Believe Me" was heard first in 1914 in a musical play called *The Girl From Utah*, yet it could still be played quite straight and hold a haunting poetic appeal for, if not the present generation of musical simpletons, certainly its parents (as well as that of the chorus, the melody of the verse is remarkable, too, as Mr Bordman points out—though more conventionally so than this). Of course, the tune has become a "standard" that has inspired a good few outstanding improvising instrumentalists, so we are likely to know it in more or less sophisticated versions (a pity it was not included in the Kern songs arranged by Richard Rodney Bennett for Barry Tuckwell's French horn on ASD 3844). This early power of Kern's to express a modern nostalgia was not just a flash in the pan: one thinks of a song perhaps even more poignantly powerful, about "Go, Little Boat" of 1917 (which despite the lyric by P. G. Wodehouse is now played rather than sung).

Mr Bordman has written a long and painstaking book. For reasons I will come to, it cannot strictly be accounted a success, but it does clearly show Kern's part in the Americanization (and spotheosis) of what I will continue to call the musical play; and also, rather less satisfactorily, in the formal changes in the individual song. The evolved musical play (though in the hands of Mr Sondheim and others it is still developing) had its roots in middle-European operetta and English musical comedy, and when the talkies came was further elaborated and sophisticated through a succession of "musicals". Kern was born as early as 1885, was highly precocious both as composer and as man of the theatre and the music industry, and so was prominent in every phase of this history until his death. Naturally, as in the case of much more serious art-work, the bulk of what was put on stage and screen is now dead beyond reviving. But Kern's genius was such that we can never be sure that some forgotten song from some never-to-be-resuscitated musical play might not produce jamming, sounds which confuse the bats.

It is salutary to know that so many of man's defensive strategies crop up also in the animal world,

of 1902; and, apparently, no copy exists of "Bear Sort of Mother, Best Sort of Child" — but according to Andrew Birkin's recent book on the Llewellyn Davies boys thought it Kern's best tune (it was written for J. M. Barrie's burlesque *Rosy Rapture, the Pride of the Beauty Chorus*).

Mr Bordman keeps a commendably open mind about the songs generally, but it appears to me has been disadvantaged (like the present reviewer) in seemingly lacking pianistic ability and having a limited knowledge of the technicalities of music. In his Preface, he tells us that "Alfred Simon and Dr Norman Joseph spent days at my farm playing all of Kern's extent music. Much of the penetrating musical analysis in this book is really theirs, not mine". Though it is plain he knows the music, there is surely no substitute in a work of this size and character for first-hand expertise and exploration. I may in my own ignorance be quite wrong, but sometimes the musical analysis and terminology do not seem to make good sense. And occasionally, when referring to previous commentators of authority, one wishes Mr Bordman showed rather more independent spirit. The example I may be quite wrong about concerns the film *One Night in the Tropics* (1940). "Your Dream (Is the Same As My Dream)" merits more than the second-hand comment "wanders all over the lot"; while a similarly mild assessment of "Remind Me" could be controverted by one hearing of Ella Fitzgerald's rendering on Verve set No 2610 025 (this song also has a good lyric by the interesting Dorothy Fields, a late collaborator with Kern who became a close friend). But it would be churlish not to emphasize that Mr Bordman is always alert to Kern's power not only to lead taste, but also to renew his inspiration through the work of younger contemporaries and keen sense of the *zeitgeist*—thus the originality and fecundity of the score of *Very Worm For Moy* is incidentally a tribute to Gershwin and Cole Porter.

One of the wholly successful features of Mr Bordman's book, fascinating to those of a certain age, is his giving the act-by-act list of musical numbers for each play as he comes to it in his narration, like

The electrophonic linkman

By Wilfrid Mellers

GEORGE MARTIN with JEREMY HORNSBY:
All You Need Is Ears
256pp. Macmillan. £7.95.
0 333 23859 1

In so-called primitive societies most, if not all, music was and is communally functional; in the great religious societies of the East and the (medieval) West music was and is, if not exactly communal, concerned with experience beyond individual identity. In post-Renaissance Europe, however, music and the other arts became increasingly an interrelationship between communicator and communicatee, culminating in the work of composers such as Beethoven and Wagner who believed so fanatically in their private identities that they could identify them with a public function: their art could and should (and to a degree did) remake the world. Today's society, both in Europe, in America which is Europe's baby, and in the "global village" which has been spawned by both, no longer preserves this credence in the divine right of the human will. In the arts "elitist" are threatened by "populist" values, and there is a sense in which pop music can be described as tribal as well as primitive. There are still communicators and communicatees, but the organic relation between them has little affinity with the conventions of concert promotion. That this relationship is, in an industrial technocracy, in part *manufactured*, as it isn't in a "real" primitive community, doesn't alter the fact that the mechanics of production are part of the experience. The art and its packaging can never again be separable.

Even in the taping and recording of "classical" music it is evident that, with the producer, a new dimension has emerged: music, though in that field the basic product is not radically changed. With the various types of pop music, however, the producer uses his technology to foster communion between the creator(s) and the tribe; since George Martin's book is one of the first to describe how this happens from the inside, it has an importance greater than its chattily discursive nature might suggest. As everyone knows, Martin was the Beatles' producer during their golden years; academic musicians were inclined to suggest that he, being more literate than the Beatles, probably alone made their inchoate mumblings musically intelligible. When, seven years ago, I wrote a book about the Beatles I knew little about their working methods but believed sufficiently in the virility of oral traditions to suspect that genius was not thus dependent on literacy. What emerges from Martin's book is that he acted as midwife to the Beatles' creativity: which sprang from John and Paul, with George and Ringo as necessary stooges. Martin mixed and processed the product, sometimes prompted by specific hints from a Beatle, occasionally of his own volition. It was thus related to an identity, or to the Beatles' corporate identity, yet at the same time outside it. Electrophonics effect the link between Hero and Tribe.

Although the producer's role must be subservient to the artist-creator's, it is thus crucial, and calls for talents, if not genius, of a high order. Reading this book it soon becomes clear that George Martin not only has exceptionally acute ears, which are what a musician starts from, but also that he is exceptionally clever and exceptionally intelligent (the two are not synonymous). Though the book is (I suspect slightly) edited and starts off with the wearisomely recognizable side of his character; the ability to write sad, extensive and memorable melodies came from who knows what tenderness of feeling about existence, and sensitivity to chordal progressions. I doubt if one would have got on with him easily, but a side of him was very sympathetic: he said that Stravinsky could not talk intelligently about Wagner; he had the sleeve buttons of his jackets made actually to work; to see up Ira Gershwin, indolent in providing words for the tune that eventually became the marvellous song "Long Ago and Far Away", Kern composed and sent him a lyric for the melody beginning "Watching little Alice pee".

There are two good indexes in the book, one general, one of songs. The section of photographs is interesting, but its representation of theatrical productions is sketchy in the extreme. In a work from a scholarly publisher, the virtual absence of references and lack of a bibliography are verging on the heinous. The personal portrait of Kern the author draws is more flattering than one has seen before, and he makes us feel his liking for the man is justified. He likes the music, too—of course—and despite the strictures I have made his judgments seem generally sensible. Alas, he pricks one of the bubbles of interest one cherished about the beautiful of works Kern turned out in a somewhat lofter genre: Mark Twain (Portrait For Orchestra) is said to be "diffuse, meandering". Rather more leniency is shown towards "Scenario For Orchestra", commissioned by the Cleveland Symphony Orchestra; and Mr Bordman is neutral about the transcriptions for string quartet. Nevertheless, I live in hope of hearing all these one day. What I fear I shall never hear are a late collaborator with Kern who became a close friend). But it would be churlish not to emphasize that Mr Bordman is always alert to Kern's power not only to lead taste, but also to renew his inspiration through the work of younger contemporaries and keen sense of the *zeitgeist*—thus the originality and fecundity of the score of *Very Worm For Moy* is incidentally a tribute to Gershwin and Cole Porter.

One of the wholly successful features of Mr Bordman's book, fascinating to those of a certain age, is his giving the act-by-act list of musical numbers for each play as he comes to it in his narration, like the theatre programmes used to do (perhaps still do), plus production details and on account of the show's reception. I take almost at random Sunny (1925). The eponymous heroine was Marilyn Miller and the hero Clifton Webb; Cliff Edwards had a specialty ukulele number; and Fred Astaire choreographed Miss Miller's dances; the songs included "Who?", "Two Little Blue Birds", and the title number. Those who have not lived through a good slice of the period covered (Kern died in 1945) will, because of this systematic treatment, perhaps tire of reading the book continuously, though that does not affect its value as a work of reference. The strand of narration of Kern's life outside music, and the depiction of his personality, is just not quite vivid enough to compel the reader along regardless.

This is not entirely Mr Bordman's fault. Kern was a fundamentally reticent character, though flamboyant in many ways. He was always dapper, were broad and broadly patterned ties decades before they became fashionable and generally available. His temper was sharp, he knew what he wanted and drove to get it: a cocky little b, one might say. He was a successful music publisher as well as a phenomenally industrious popular composer, so made a great deal of money, much of which he spent on collections of various kinds—pictures, books, coins, stamps.

Out of these he made more money: he had meticulousness, flair and luck—when he bought a first edition of *Endymion* for $100 it proved to contain the author's signature, overlooked by the auctioneer and previous owners. He liked food, playing poker, practical jokes. He seems to have been uxorious, deeply loved his daughter, was unobtrusively charitable. All this, told in his not distinguished style by Mr Bordman, seems oddly expected, as though invented by some popular novelist writing a blockbuster on a Great American Composer (missing out what would nowadays be obligatory, the erotic). Perhaps it is only adding another cliché to say that the source of Kern's power to move was enigmatic, like that of many another creator: the efficient organization of score after score for his films and musical plays came from a euphoric sprightliness typical of the pinkted utterances of celebrities. Martin's humanity and integrity soon wins through, until we recognize in him a man as remarkable for charm as for ability. One learns from his book much about the music industry that is of equal significance musically and sociologically; and one accepts that: even when he writes in apparent naivety of compositional technicalities, he is always concerned with the integrity of aural experience. The advice he proffers would be of use to any young composer, whatever field he may be working in—concert music, pop or film.

Moreover the book reminds us how wide Martin's range has been. Obsessed with his association with the Beatles, we are apt to forget that after orthodox training at the Guildhall and practical experience of army music-making, Martin started in the 1950s as a "straight" music producer with EMI; and that through the years he has worked with celebrities as various as Sir Malcolm Sargent, Peter Ustinov, Peter Sellers, Glen Laine, Flanders and Swann, Judy Garland, Shirley Bassey, Tommy Steele, Sam Cletz, Millicent Martin, etc. Moreover, he has created an array of film scores—in addition to those for the Beatle movies—which are equally distinguished for skill and probity. Probity, indeed, is the quality that finally emerges from this book: which is remarkable, given the worlds Martin has lived and worked in. Although he now has these worlds at his feet and operates from vast studios in blissful Montserrat with twenty-four and even thirty-two-track machines, it is evident that his strength of mind and his sense of humour will not allow the machines to gobble him up. He has not forgotten that *Sergeant Pepper* still the most significant event in pop's brief history, was made with carefully improvised empiricism on four tracks only. For Martin, ends are still more important than means.

These finely-wrought engravings by Richard Shirley Smith, for a Folio Society edition of Lord Chesterfield's Letters to his Son (1973), of three characters without great and a young woman making her fall from it are included in Albert Garrett's British Wood Engraving of the 20th Century: a Personal View (223pp. Scolar Press, £12.50, 0 85967 604 6). They are fitting illustrations of Chesterfield's opinion in one letter that "the Graces do not seem to be natives of Great Britain; and I doubt, the best of us here have more of rough than polished diamond."

The great Georgian double-act

By Nicholas Shrimpton

ANTHONY VAUGHAN:
Born to Please
Hannah Pritchard, Actress, 1711-1768
A Critical Biography
195pp. Society for Theatre Research £6.
0 85430 030 8

GEORGE WINCHESTER STONE AND GEORGE M. KAHRL:
David Garrick:
A Critical Biography
771pp. Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press $60.
0 8093 0931 9

"There is", Horace Walpole told a correspondant in March, 1761, "nothing new but a very indifferent play called *The Jealous Wife*, so well acted as to have succeeded greatly". Walpole was perhaps a little too harsh on Colman's workmanlike text. But he was clearly quite right about the importance of its performers. Indeed his comment neatly encapsulates the problem which has bedevilled all subsequent attempts to explain the theatrical life of mid-eighteenth century England. The three glittering decades of Garrick's reign at Drury Lane produced only two new plays with any real claim to endure: Cumberland's *The West Indian* and Garrick and Colman's *The Clandestine Marriage*. Covent Garden, though slightly luckier, could offer little beyond *She Stoops To Conquer* and *The Rivals*. The staple diet of the English theatre-goer in this remarkable period, in other words, was not great writings. Again and again indifferent new plays, or lacklustre adaptations of good old plays, were made to live by the ephemeral art of acting.

The two most recent attempts to come to terms with this elusive phenomenon concentrate, as it happens, on the very stars who delivered the original production of *The Jealous Wife*. Daly was played by David Garrick, his jealous spouse by Hannah Pritchard. Their long lasting partnership, they played together, George Winchester Stone informs us, a total of 652 times) was sometimes mocked, particularly when her unfeeling stoutness made his diminutive stature suspicuous. But as Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, and as Beatrice and Benedick, they formed one of the greatest double-acts in the history of the stage.

Contemporary critics were inclined to divide the honours equally between them. "I will not separate the performers", wrote Thomas Davies of the scene after the murder of Duncan, "for the merits of both were transcendent". Historians have been less even-handed. The conspicuous rectitude of Hanoah Pritchard's private life made her an unattractive proposition for romantic biography. And she had the particular misfortune to fall foul of Johnson at his most savagely abusive. Garrick felt that his old friend's tragedy *Irene*, lacked action, so he introduced as a piece of business the strangling of the heroine on stage. Unfortunately, on the first night, as Mrs Pritchard knelt with the bow-string round her neck and two lines still to speak, the cries of mutmgs from the audience were so fierce that the performance could not proceed. Johnson never forgave her and she went down to posterity as "a vulgar idiot".

Anthony Vaughan has set out to restore her reputation. He is, in fact, a remote descendant of his subject and his book is unashamedly laudatory. He concedes that she was, in Garrick's words, "apt to blubber her sorrows" and that as a tragedian she was better at rage and horror than at pity and tenderness. But he still finds a great deal to say for her. Her versatility was clearly remarkable and this wide-ranging success owed little to her looks. Never a beauty, she quite early in life became inappropriately fat for many of her roles. Goldsmith, in 1759, expressed his dismay at "an actress that might act the Wapping, familiarly without a bolster padding in the character of Jane Shore". Mrs Pritchard was not discouraged. In a triumph of skill over ambulopaths she continued to play such unlikely parts as Jane Shore, and even Millamant, well into the 1760s.

Her remarkable voice and her gift for repartee had a great deal to do with this striking persistence. In other parts, particularly the imperious roles to which she eventually specialised, her girth became a distinct advantage. Vaughan reproduces a splendid sketch by Fussell of the dagger scene in *Macbeth*. The legendary expressiveness of Garrick's eyes is vividly caught, as he stares past the dripping daggers. Yet Hannah Pritchard, who in the Zoffany painting of the same scene looks merely large and dull, is here the more frightening of the two. Massively indignant, she towers over her disappointing husband like an enraged Alp. This single painting does as much as anything in the book to justify the patient collection of biographical minutiae with which Vaughan has rescued Mrs Pritchard from calumny and neglect.

Neglect is the last thing from which her co-star might be thought to suffer, *David Garrick, A Critical Biography* being the fourteenth substantial account of his life. The co-authors are quick to defend their return to the topic. Not only have previous biographers been misled by Goldsmith's witty portrait of Garrick as "a dupe to his art", they have also been improperly "anecdotal". George Winchester Stone and George M. Kahrl offer instead "an analytical rather than chronological biography, by categories not synthesis". The expertise which they bring to this task is, of course, formidable. Professor Stone was responsible for the volume covering the Garrick years in *The London Stage, 1660-1800*. Professor Kahrl is the co-editor of *Garrick's Letters*. The way in which they have chosen to apply these skills, however, has peculiar consequences. This is simultaneously the definitive life of Garrick and not a life of Garrick at all.

In practice, "biography by categories and not synthesis" proves to mean an extensive collection of scholarly essays on various aspects of Garrick's life and times. Stone and Kahrl on Garrick, the private man. One consequence of this division of labour is that the text tends to repeat details, occasionally contradicting itself in the process. Another, inevitably, is that connections between the two strands are often missing. Garrick's illnesses, for example, though listed in scrupulous detail, are placed in a separate appendix. The reader who seeks a rounded sense of the man's personality, or a picture of his existence from day to day, will still need to turn to the sort of "anecdotal" life which this volume supposedly replaces.

When Stone and Kahrl do supply conventional biography, it is often token work for word from the latter's introduction to the *Letters*, and the "analytical" method is not always as impressive as it initially seems. It is interesting to learn that Garrick built his performances by observing details of everyday behaviour. But whether anything is added to this assertion by a statistical breakdown of occasions in the polish in which he lived (113 different trades, with tailors the largest group) is very doubtful. And peripheral personalities have sometimes been researched less thoroughly.

These reservations aside, *David Garrick, A Critical Biography* is much to recommend it. There is an outstanding bibliographical study of Garrick's pamphleteering and book-collecting. "Both before and after the purchase of the Hackman quartos", it is concluded, "Garrick brought to the theatre more knowledge of pre-Restoration drama than any actor-manager-playwright of the century." The effects on his thinking of his visits to France are discussed with similar acuteness and valuable glimpses are given of his rehearsal techniques, managerial innovations and effects on literary critics. In the account of Garrick the actor, though admirably thorough in its own way, there are fewer insights into his art. The authors' procedure predispose them towards Garrick the scholar and gentleman. The smell of the greasepaint and the roar of the crowd, and the theatrical powers which enabled Garrick to turn an indifferent play into a great popular success, remain tantalisingly absent.

Japanned Irish

By Della Couling

ULICK O'CONNOR:
Three Noh Plays
The Grand Inquisitor, Submarine, Deirdre
47pp. Wolfhound Press. £4.50 (Paperback, £2).
0 905 47347 4

Japanese Noh theatre has long had its adulterers in the West: in this century, Pound published his translations of Noh plays in 1916 and introduced Noh theatre in Yeats, many of whose subsequent plays show its influence. On the Continent, Brecht was one among many to use the concepts of Noh theatre in his own plays.

These influences have in turn influenced others, so that by now there is some element of Noh—whether it second or third hand—in a large proportion of Western theatre. That element has, however, in most cases been gradually diluted and absorbed into the Western dramatical system certainly to enrich it, but unrelated, as it were, into a language Westerners understand. Ulick O'Connor's *Three Noh Plays* have not been so "translated"; O'Connor has attempted to reproduce in English a form of theatre adhering faithfully to Noh conventions, and in their rigid adherence to the Japanese model, though in Irish settings, his plays come across as humourless, rather pretentious, and certainly lacking in charm—one of the main ingredients of Japanese Noh.

They contain a few bright ideas. *The Grand Inquisitor* updates Dostoevsky's version by presenting a modern Irish archbishop who resists Vatican *aggiornamento* by refusing to have the liturgy performed in the vernacular: "I will love you through my people/With the horror of reality/Without offering them the solace of mystery." *Submarine*, two IRA men returning to Ireland in 1941 in a German submarine: the usual characters in Sir Roger Casement, found in the more successful of the plays, although the few German phrases contain so many misspelling as to make one hope gobbledegook. (This otherwise attractively produced little book is spattered throughout with misprints).

Deirdre uses the well-known Irish legend, and contains a secondary character, Mac of the Flats, who tells the story of Deirdre and Naoise in a prelude. Into this traditionalist style that provides the only leaven of intentional humour in these plays. In his introduction O'Connor refers to Synge's early seventh-century pharaonic drama, "Deirdre of the Sorrows", which Synge died in 1443. This introduction contains several other inaccuracies, and statements so vague as to be meaningless: "Japanese Noh theatre has

The Emperor's Republican tutor

By Igor Vinogradoff

JEAN-CHARLES BAUDET and FRANÇOISE NICOD (Editors):
Correspondance de Frédéric-César de La Harpe et Alexandre Ier, suivie de le correspondance de F.-C. de La Harpe avec les membres de la famille Impériale de Russie
3 Volumes. 730pp, 703pp. 865pp. Neuchâtel: A la Baconnière.

This mammoth publication includes 361 letters exchanged between the Emperor Alexander of Russia and his fiery former tutor over a period of some forty years (1785-1824), together with 160 exchanged by La Harpe with nine other members of the Imperial family (1788-1837). These last only account for 304 pages of the total correspondence, so that a good 1,700 pages, or 850,000 words, cover the exchanges between Alexander and his tutor. The fifty-five pieces written by the sovereign have all but one been published and twenty-eight of them are childish or adolescent notes, mostly apologies for laziness or inattention, written before 1795. Some of the others are, if short, extremely interesting, including es they do the future Emperor's short-lived declaration of his intention to refuse the throne (February 1796), his horror at his father's lunacies (*démoncos*) and his own equally short-lived will to give Russia a constitution (October 1797)—both long since published. What a trickle they represent beside the torrent of the various Vaudois's 306 apostrophes ranging from business notes to solid sermons up to 20,000 words in length, only nine of which have previously been published—one of the longest, loudest salvoes ever aimed at a devoted sovereign's head by an ex-tutor.

Frédéric-César de la Harpe was born in 1754 at Rolle in the Pays de Vaud, a tiny place on Lac Léman, the son of a retired captain in the Piedmonese service who worshipped Frederick the Great and the great heroes of antiquity and baptized his son accordingly. Frédéric-César did not follow in his father's footsteps as a mercenary soldier. He was born at the right time and in the right place to be swept off his feet by the French Revolution. Well educated at Huldenstein in the Grisons and Tübingen, multilingual and well read in the classics and the fashionable *philosophes* with their belief in natural liberty and equality for all men, La Harpe soon discovered that he was the subject of Their Excellencies of Berne, and an inferior person with the right to practise in the courts but no political rights or hope of any advancement in the service of the state.

This because Vaud had been conquered from Savoy by Berne in the sixteenth century and the Vaudois were like the Irish (one of La Harpe's own comparisons): the seventy families who monopolized all political and social power and influence in Berne and its subject territories. It was natural for an ambitious young Vaudois to seek his fortune elsewhere and by 1782 La Harpe was launched on his career as one of the most successful tutors of all time.

He toyed with thoughts of England or America but fate, or rather Ribeupierre, one of his schoolfellows at Hadenstein, set him on the golden road. The Ribeaupierres were well established at the Court of Russia and his friend got him the post of best-leader to two spotty young Russians called Lanskoi on the grand tour of Italy. This was the great age of governesses and tutors in Russia, where many families like Lloven, Banckendorff, Lamsdorff, Nicolai, Adlerberg, were founded or enriched as pedagogues or governesses to the Imperial family. Lanskoi was a prestigious name in Russia at this time, when a Lanskoi was Catherine's reigning favourite—one of the very few men she ever deeply loved and mourned. La Harpe's success with his two tiresome young relatives caused the favourite to notice him. He was passed by Catherine's Paris factotum Baron Grimm (letter-here first published), summoned to Petersburg and approved by Catherine herself. By 1784 he found himself installed as French, and very soon as principal tutor to the Grand Dukes Alexander (aged seven) and Constantine (aged five). The father of the little boys, the future Emperor Paul, had not of course had anything to do with his appointment.

Came the Revolution in France and La Harpe soon found himself immersed in politics, both Bernese and Russian, as well as having to steer a difficult course as a convinced Republican tutor on the steps of the Imperial throne. It was inevitable that this bitterly anti-Bernese Vaudois should become an agitator, pamphleteering in the press of Paris and London against Bernese oligarchy, and sympathizing deeply with the Revolution in France. Their Excellencies of Berne made a clumsy effort through the Prince of Württemberg to get La Harpe dismissed but Catherine showed her mettle by resisting every pressure. La Harpe was allowed to retain his place, provided that he ceased to interfere in Bernese politics and that he went on teaching from perolked classical historians like Plutarch or permitted philosophes like Condillac without quotation from the odious Paris press or reference to the horrible happenings in France. Benevolent reforming despotism moulded on the Antonines or Frederick the Great became the essence of the gospel preached to the young prince. That it involved implicit rejection of a mass of "superstition" in the shape of Orthodox Christianity and of the Muscovite tradition as accepted by most Russians was nothing to the purpose.

Catherine wanted to use La Harpe for her own ends and was not going to let him go till she had tried him. This was where his role loomed as potentially important in the history of the dynasty. In 1793 his senior pupil Alexander was married, at the age of sixteen, to the exquisite Elizabeth of Baden, aged fourteen. The adolescent couple took joint lessons from La Harpe and Catherine sought to use the enormous influence the tutor had acquired over his pupil to forward what was now becoming an obsessive dream to her—a plan to strike her son, the personine Paul, out of the succession in favour of her favourite grandson Alexander. For this it was essential to secure the boy's consent against a father who terrified him, and to this end no stronger influence could be found than that of La Harpe.

The Empress sounded out the tutor in a two-hour audience in October, 1793. The only record of what passed is La Harpe's own, recorded some years later. According to this he utterly refused to listen to the scheme; he found it all the easier to do so because the Empress only talked in hints and circumlocutions. Like all La Harpe's autobiographical anecdotes his version must be treated with reserve. Catherine had many other strings to her bow and La Harpe's credibility is not enhanced by his simultaneous assertion that it was his influence as this woman was discussed the Empress from dispatching Rapnin's 50,000 troops in Poland to join the coalition against Revolutionary France. If one thing is certain it is that Catherine had at this time no intention of taking an active part in the French war until the Polish imbroglio had been finally settled, and this was not achieved till two years later.

However La Harpe may have magnified his part in later years—his tendency to megalomaniac reminiscences was always with him—it seems probable that he opposed the notion of a change in the succession and did life best to get his pupils on to better terms with their impossible father, despite the latter's constant snubs and furious dislike. This was not entirely disinterested virtue, though so trumpeted in later days. La Harpe was not a good psychologist and seems genuinely to have believed that Paul's insufferable faults were due to nothing but his mother's unkindness and unfairness and would disappear once he was seated on his rightful throne. Moreover it seemed certain that he would reverse his mother's policies, and La Harpe held to the belief, later partially justified, that this would mean a change of attitude, not only towards Poland but towards La Harpe's second fatherland, Revolutionary France.

Catherine was, however, displeased and La Harpe received notice of dismissal from the end of 1794. He managed to prolong his stay till May 1795, when he retired accompanied by Alexander's sons, the rank of colonel in the Russian service, two small pensions paid in a depreciating currency and a small gratuity. He never ceased to nourish a grievance over his shabby treatment by the Russian Court and several of his letters dwell in lengthy detail on these matters. The Emperor consoled him with affectionate compliments, high official rank and the highest decoration in his gift, but does not seem ever to have entirely satisfied him over money. It was a subject which horsed Alexander and may have contributed to the cooling of his feelings towards La Harpe in later years. The fact is La Harpe does not seem to have fared too badly. He brought a German merchant bairess back with him from Petersburg in the shape of Dorothea Boehrlingk, e devoted wife through whom he was connected with Albedyll and Lamsdorff, both important figures at court. His handsome Palladian houses on his properties near Paris and Lausanne do not look like abodes of poverty in his pretty sketches. His libraries were considerable as can be seen to this day. He entertained ambassadors and princes. His principal material grievance seems to have been his inability to afford an "équipage"—presumably a coach-and-four.

1795 began the most active and exciting period in La Harpe's life. Proscribed by Berne in Vaud, he settled for a short time near Geneva and removed to Paris in 1796, ostensibly on family business, really to intrigue with all his might with the new French authorities against "Messieurs de Berne". The revolutionary idealist struggling for the freedom of his native canton was doubled with a rancorous seekar efter vengeeons on the patty oligarchs who had humiliated him from birth, persecuted his kinsmen and svan followed him with chair malice into Russia. La Harpe was not to claim a sentimental feeling for the ancient history of the Swiss Confederation and refused to see Schiller's *William Tell* at Weimar because it might have moved him too much; but his heart was French and Vaudois before everything, and he had little use for government by majority in Switzerland because the majority meant German peasantocracy, in the democratic forest cantons or the equivalent of oligarchy in the cities like Berne. His aim in Paris was to mobilize the Directory and its generals against the old Confederation and this is what in 1798, helped by Ochs the Burgomaster of Basle and the new spirit in Switzerland, he managed to achieve. Without French armies Berne and her allies could not have been defeated by the revolutionaries of Vaud and Aargau and the other weak "new" cantons. As it was, the divided ancient cantons, though a large majority in numbers, fell before the forces of the new "Helvetian Republic, One and Indivisible", of which La Harpe became senior director and effective dictator with French help from July 1798.

La Harpe's enormous apologia for his period of dictatorship, written for the Emperor in October 1801, and here first published, makes some astonishingly frank admissions and shows up the point of view of an "enlightened liberal" dictator who called in the French to turn out Bons, the capital of Unterwalden, rather than employ "fellow-countrymen" against the guilty illiterates who were punished for resisting and whose incinerated capital served as a warning to their fellow "fanatics of this (hateful) Swiss Vaudée". The Rigi pilgrimages were suppressed by "wise" advice. La Harpe himself was tireless in the supervision of his ministers and officials, lest they stray an inch from their instructions.

His fussy dictatorship lasted eighteen months and fell when he attempted to suppress the National Assembly which contained a large majority against his "salutary reforms". La Harpe was proud of his collaboration with Massena's French against the Austro-Russian armies; it was not his fault that Suvorov's Russians managed to escape across the Panix pass, which he had given orders to block. His role throughout was that of an enthusiastic backer of the French against the coalition's armies which were welcomed by a large proportion, if not a majority, of Swiss. He fell as soon as France decided he had become a liability and withdrew support from him. It is in character that he was never able to admit a single error in his conduct, that he continued to wear the gigantic sabre of a Helvetian director in Petersburg in 1801-1802 and that he long remained in his own eyes the only lawful representative of government in "Helvetia", even justifying his record in a long pamphlet when he was seventy-eight.

This was the crucial period in La Harpe's life. His principles remained unchanged but he was now convinced by personal experience that government by Assembly was absurd, that democracy was by its nature obscurantist and that an iron dictator was required if progress and enlightenment were to be achieved against the will of the majority. Hence his approval of the coup of Brumaire, his admiration, not fatally suspended, for Napoleon and his genuine belief in the autocracy in Russia as the only hope of progress in the face of half-baked constitutional proposals, "regicide" aristocrat and quasi-praetorian guards. La Harpe's remaining thirty-seven years, whether in Paris or the Pays de Vaud, whose independence as a canton he battled to preserve in 1814-15, was entirely conditioned by the memories of these agitated eighteen months.

He had two short periods of strong influence with the Emperor—in 1801-02 and 1814-15. During the first and most important, back in Petersburg and working with Alexander's famous "Secret Committee", he used his influence to favour Russian primary education along with higher schools and universities. He helped to simplify the administration of the Empire through the newly established ministries. He saw the Emperor regularly in secret and helped to defeat the plans both of the Anglophil aristocrats like the Voroutsovs, who wanted a quasi-English constitution, and of the Gallophils, who thought in terms of rapid, radical French reforms.

His motto was "Hasten slowly" and he was strongly opposed even to talk of early "liberty" for the serfs; his short-lived changes of attitude on this subject were due to fear of what Napoleon might effect by Polish-political proclamations promising liberty, such as were never in fact issued; the fact was that La Harpe was completely ignorant of Russian conditions outside Petersburg, was astonished by the spontaneous partisan resistance of the Russian people to the French invaders and made the mistake of minimizing its importance. His strong dislike of "aristocracy", which went with many memories of personal slights, found issue in an extravagant demand for drastic punishment of the regicides of March 1801, and thus appealed both to the passionate mourning of the Dowager Empress, who blamed everyone except family's feelings and to the Emperor's private prejudices. This was La Harpe the courtier. With his continual boasts of his own personal virtue, truthfulness and incorruptibility, and the implied suggestion that all who differed from him were corrupt and lying traitors, La Harpe could be tedious and made himself unpopular in Petersburg.

His torrent of letters from Paris after 1802 urging Alexander to avoid all anti-Gallic coalitions followed naturally on his failed effort to arrange a marriage treaty between Bonaparte and the Emperor in 1801-2. (A tentative autograph approach from Alexander to Bonaparte in May, 1802, was given La Harpe to use at his discretion, but was never delivered by him and is here printed for the first time.)

The Emperor only wrote to him three times between 1803 and 1813; he virtually ignored the seventy-nine emotional letters La Harpe wrote to him during this period—sermons, sometimes so described and written in a scolding and complaining pedagogic style combined with constant protestations of love and devotion. The feeling that he was being ignored often took hold of La Harpe and made him write several times as from his death bed, hoping that a final will and testament would make an impression where his living voice did not. He longed for invitations to Petersburg and (although he recognized the

dangers) even considered using a Montgolfier balloon to take him there; he could never believe that his advice by ward of mouth would not be heeded, if he were on the spot.

This brought a change, followed by Napoleon's Spanish adventure and the arrival of Chornyshev (the Emperor's cleverest agent) in Paris. La Harpe, like many Frenchmen from Fouché to Talleyrand, began to lose confidence in Napoleon, all the more as when it became obvious that he was preparing for a war on Russia. The year 1812 saw La Harpe passionately on Alexander's side; much of his military counsel was absurd but there was no doubt of the genuineness of his feelings and 1814 remitted him with his Emperor to the Imperial GHQ. Alexander received him with open arms and loaded him with honours—the highest possible position in the Russian civil service with the title of "Most High Excellency", the order of St Andrew (Russia's Garter) and a task which would keep any bureaucratic wolverine busy for months—the job of handling the 8,000 petitions and 3,000 petitioners who descended on the Emperor in Paris. Did La Harpe feel that he was being cleverly and courteously sidetracked? The people of Vaud at any rate rejoiced.

La Harpe could always find time to protect his little fatherland. He had no trouble in persuading Alexander to frustrate the Austro-Austrian manoeuvres aimed at bringing back the ancient Swiss Confederation with its thirteen cantons and its subject lands. The reconstructed Federation, including Vaud and the new cantons with full rights, was recognized by the Congress of Vienna thanks to Alexander. This was La Harpe's lasting monument; it was not Helvetia "One and Indivisible" as he had tried to build it with French help in 1798, but it weathered the storms of 1830 and 1848 and the petty upheaval of the Sonderbund. Switzerland became the truly neutral country La Harpe had always worked for, if not on the French model he would have preferred.

That Alexander insisted on a generous treatment of France in 1814 was undoubtedly partly due to La Harpe, the semi-Frenchmen. The same was true of the liberal Charter which the Emperor imposed on Louis XVIII. France, which her great educated middle class was, in La Harpe's eyes, one of the chief European countries worthy of a Constitution. England was, of course, a special case—much respected for her institutions (Erskine and Holland were among his correspondents), hated with French hatred for the ruthless egoism of her Tory oligarchy and for her gigantic conquests, as the only gainer by the wars.

Otherwise, the Congress of Vienna gave La Harpe small satisfaction. He saw Nesselarode outwitted by Metternich, Alexander frustrated by the triple alliance of England, Austria and France. The schemes which he supported for a liberally reorganized German Empire (possibly under the Duke of Oldenburg, the Emperor's relative!) and for a constitutional Poland, bound to Russia under a single monarch, were either frustrated or realized so imperfectly as to produce the fatal Polish uprising of 1830. La Harpe sat on none of the important committees at Vienna; even on the Swiss committee he was represented by Bausa Stein. He was reduced to peddling ineffective schemes for the restoration of Genoa or the compensation of the Ionian Islands, when he was not bringing worthy Vaudois manufacturers to the Emperor's notice.

March 1815 put him for the last time in the limelight with Napoleon's return from Elba. Much as he disapproved the Corsican in his years of insolent world conquest, La Harpe chose to believe in his conversion to constitutionalism and violently opposed the second restoration of the hated Bourbons. (If there must be a Bourbon, let it be the Duke of Orleans, the future Louis Philippe.) He refused to join Alexander at his new HQ, opposed the adherence of Switzerland to the seventh coalition, prophesied victory for Napoleon and was much put out by Waterloo.

It was characteristic of him that he was still regretting Waterloo in the 1820s while constantly retelling the stupidities of the resurrected Bourbons. 1830 took him unawares; he thought that Charles X would win and trembled at the memory of the sixteenth-century Anabaptists when disorders broke out all over Europe and the mobs were sent from Paris to Warsaw. He had violently disapproved as "aristocratic" the failed Decembrist coup in Russia in 1825 after the death of his dear Emperor, whom he had sincerely mourned. He had admired the abnegation of the brothers Constantine and Nicholas, each of whom proclaimed the other Emperor.

La Harpe had four all influence after 1815 but remained a pet of the Russian Imperial Family and a sort of living relic to be venerated by liberal pilgrims to his native canton. He dined with Alexander two days running, tête-à-tête just before the signature of the Holy Alliance, but knew nothing of it. He hailed the "liberalism" of the Emperor's emancipation of the Baltic peasantry, a meaningless gesture because without any grant of land, landed his speeches to the Polish Diet and cheered his approval of a constitution to the Kingdom of Württemberg. He wrote volumes of denunciation of the Congresses of Troppau and Verona and got no reply.

He was invited to bear-lead the young Grand Duke Michael round Italy in 1818-19 and wrote some civil phrases in praise of this "virulent" (a euphemism for violent) young man but got no thanks for his "boring" lectures from His Imperial Highness, who preferred pubs and parades. His last Romanov correspondent was the liberal Grand Duchess Maria of Weimar, the friend of Goethe, who sent her son to contemplate him (unfortunately he was impeded by his measles) and was thanking him for advice about Tocqueville and Sismondi as late as 1837.

Did Alexander often read the colossal letters with which La Harpe favoured him when they were separated? He only wrote to him once after 1815, though he had many other correspondents to whom he would write reams. He acted on his advice regarding Vaud and France and agreed with him about Poland but disagreed profoundly about Napoleon in June 1815—the only flatly contradictory letter from him in the correspondence.

The Emperor read much during his endless journeys throughout Russia and Europe. He may well have skimmed through many of La Harpe's letters before 1812. It was then that he took to reading the Bible on these journeys and mystical longings took up more and more of his time. La Harpe, the rigid eighteenth century disciple of the materialist Condillac, had no use for Lavater or Chamberland. What would he have thought of Prince Galitzine and the Apocalypse, or Jung-Stilling and the German mystics, or Labzin and the Free Masons, or Baroness de Krüdener or the Abbé Phelins? Towards the end of his unhappy life Alexander's pals lay in these spiritual wilderesses; here he was leagues away from any rationalizing pedagogue. He could inflict inhuman punishments on the Semenovsky mutineers because he saw in them the diabolical instruments of the secret societies, Klyuchevsky called La Harpe a "garrulous French bookler"; he would not have called him a bookler, but he known of his colossal correspondence. But there was no room in La Harpe's *Encyclopedia* for the religious diabolis and stirrings of Alexander and the monarch's ceaseless travelling and searching of innumerable scriptures only led him ever further away from the old tutor.

All La Harpe's intellectual processes had been firmly settled by 1789, when he was thirty-five. He never doubted that he knew the answers to all political and philosophical problems. His pupil Alexander, born in 1777, and twelve years old when revolution come, was exposed to decades of experience. Alexander never thought he knew the answers to all mortal problems and sought religious guidance to assist him, however much his marvellous natural courtesy made him seem. La Harpe's devoted lodinavor, whenever he encountered that loquecuble pedagogue.

Impressionable, pliable and changing as he drove without a stop from place to place and skimmed through treatise after treatise, his personality had not been shaped by La Harpe; it had developed into something totally different and perhaps superior to his ancient, static and self-satisfied tutor's. It was impossible to predict how he would act in given situations. Born to bridge the centuries, he represented better than any other monarch of the time, the dilemma of the romantic, religious reaction against the reasoned dogmatism of La Harpe's formulas and ethics. The excess his personality is a difficult matter. It was at least incomparably more complex than the graven image of La Harpe.

None of this romantique's hostile criticism of the tutor's personality or nature. His notions of view may have been fixed and rigid. They were formed by certain doctrines, anti-religious, egalitarian, wedded to a belief in everlasting progress, current and well-night compulsory for his generation of the French-thinking upper-middle class throughout all western Europe in the 1790s. These were the men who hoed the top soil of the revolution everywhere, who could not comprehend the change in depth of European feeling from 1800 onwards, when the Emperor Alexander came to power and saw the answer given to Napoleon by Hafer and the Spanish peasants, the German universities and his own great people.

No satisfactory biography of La Harpe exists in any language. This excellent scholarly edition of the letters he exchanged with Alexander and nine other Romanovs helps to fill the gap. The editors have contributed a useful introduction and some good illustrations and have carefully established the texts of all the letters with meticulous accuracy, together with La Harpe's own very curious notes, many of them added to his copies long after the writing of the letters with the advantages or disadvantages of hindsight. Very few of La Harpe's letters have been published before and they are accompanied by a wealth of over eighty other previously unpublished documents, including the Emperor's tentative note to Bonaparte in 1802 and a most revealing record of conversation between Czartoryski and Pozzo di Borgo in September, 1814, about the future of Poland. It may be possible to detect a few mistakes of dating and identification in the editors' own strictly limited notes but these are trifles. They are to be congratulated on a major work of scholarship which will always stand its ground as a great contribution to the history of all Europe during the years that followed the French Revolution and precipitated the rebellion of 1825.

Second voice

By Richard Freeborn

JOH ANDREW :
Writers and Society During the Live of Russian Realism
190pp. Macmillan. £15.
0 333 25912 2

Joe Andrew will be known to most British Russianists as a co-chairman of the Neo-Formalist Circle and a co-editor of its journal *Essays in Poetics*. For a number of years he has been a lecturer in Russian Studies at the University of Keele. Such facts are not given here in order to do more than suggest that Mr Andrew is astride two lines of approach in literary criticism, the formalist or structuralist, on the one hand, and the sociohistorical on the other. In *Writers and Society during the Rise of Russian Realism* his concern is with the sociohistorical approach, to the virtual exclusion of "poetics".

Such singleness of mind ren of course produce interesting and, to a certain extent, illuminating results, but the concentration on the relationship between a writer and his society must inevitably tend to overestimate his social role and thus distort, if only by omission, the totality of his achievement. There is also that awesome notion of "realism" in uniform, which for serious-minded Soviet critics of literature, following Belinsky and others, controls the study of literature as a mirror of society. By and large, such criticism has involved the prolongation of nineteenth-century attitudes into the twentieth century and a kind of fundamentalist assumption that literature, like life, must be real, must be earnest.

Oscar Wilde gave the lie (literally) to this assumption, in "The Decay of Lying", arguing that it is precisely the "cultured and fascinating liar" to whom society will turn as to its last healer:

Nor will he be welcomed by society alone. Art, breaking from the prison-house of realism, will run to greet him, and will kiss his false, unfruitful lips, knowing that he alone is in possession of the great secret of all her manifestations, the secret that Truth is entirely and absolutely a matter of style; while Life, poor, prosaic, uninteresting human life — tired of reporting herself for the benefit of Mr. Herbert Spencer, scientific historians, and the compilers of statistics in general, will follow meekly after him, and try to reproduce, in her own simple and unpainted way, some of the marvels of which he talks.

In short, nineteenth-century Russia has been invented for us by some literary imago-makers as Pushkin and Gogol and the great novelists.

It may seem facetious to pretend that Life always imitates Art but one can never be absolutely sure that it does not, and the earnest conviction that Life in the sense of society precedes Art and therefore influences the artist naturally invites Dostoevsky's Underground Man to stick out his tongue or summons Art to break free from the prison-house of realism. Mr Andrew will have none of this. His concern is the more serious one of demonstrating that in the first half of the nineteenth century Russian literature contributed to the establishment of "a second voice in Russian society", which he refers to as an "alternative government" on the pattern of Solzhenitsyn's "second government" (though Andrew does not draw this parallel). He is ready to admit that life is not a new theme ("but it remains a vital one"), although the claim that "there is no single work which examines early nineteenth-century Russian literature specifically from this angle" (accurate in a strict sense so far as British publications are concerned) does a disservice to Ronald Hingley's valuable little book on Russian writers and society; and the bibliography mentions no work of substance on the writers discussed published later than 1974, during which time several relevant studies have appeared.

For Andrew the first priority is to establish what he calls "the authors' original position in society, that is, their class origins and the implications these may have in their particular society". Such an approach demands answers to questions about the impact of the origins on a writer's self-perception, about the importance of education, and the financial situation of a writer's attitudes, about the purposes which he ostensibly serve when he writes, and so on. It is essential to such an approach that the right questions should be asked, and Andrew has asked a number of satisfyingly relevant questions about the relationship of four leading literary figures—Pushkin, Lermontov, Gogol and Belinsky—to Russian society in the first half of the nineteenth century. But are the answers as satisfactory as the questions?

In what are really four extended essays, which, though factual, tend to read like lectures and sometimes seem needlessly repetitious, Andrew provides a fair and generally balanced interpretation of the aesthetic elitism then characterised as backgrounds and attitudes of Pushkin and Lermontov, offers a sensible and lucid appraisal of Belinsky's evolution as thinker and critic, but is less than fair to Gogol. Each of these essays chapters is erudite and scholarly, though they necessarily encompass a wide range of material from the biographical and literary to the historical and socio-political, and without a certain crowding and breathlessness.

Pushkin's early liberalism is keenly delineated, and his gradual adaption of more conservative attitudes, accompanied by his conversion of a "Shakespearean gaze" in viewing the world, is successfully demonstrated in an authoritative and cogent account of the financial troubles and social humiliations of his last years.

Lermontov's aloof and sometimes mocking view of life is interpreted along the lines of Soviet interpretations as partly Decembrist in origin, partly due to Chaadaev's influence and partly Byronic. The development of his thinking is traced through his various heroes with the ambivalence and through his Irony, his attitude to his final hero's Slavophilism, though it is rightly stressed that his oppositional thinking was more a reflection of the times than the consequence of a real change of mind.

But when Gogol comes under a similar kind of scrutiny, the writer's relatively humble social birth, his money problems, his "eclectic ability" to use popular matter in the service of serious literature and his concern to use his art to reveal commonplace reality—these and other facets of his personal situation and achievement do not adequately illuminate, let alone explain, the density and complexity of his genius. For what is missing from the interpretation of Gogol is any suggestion that, as Oscar Wilde would put it, he took "a entirely and absolutely a master of style". Gogol's art certainly had its moralizing and religious dimension; his world had its deformity, illogicality and terror; and his world-view was marvellously eclectic, a hotpot. But he had such richness of style that he could not help being Wilde's "fascinating liar", and one suspects that ever since his death Russian life, and Soviet life particularly, has been trying to reproduce some of the secrets of which he talked.

The chapter on Belinsky, who insisted that art should be a witness to the truth, is the most satisfying, doubtless because as an ideologue and critic Belinsky is more readily accessible to the kind of approach which Andrew has adopted. This is the most succinct and balanced outline in recent years of Belinsky's view of literature. It can be warmly recommended to students. The same is true of the book as a whole, with the reservations already mentioned. Above all, it will stimulate interest in the relationship between literature and society, and it brings a fresh, if somewhat didactic, manner to the treatment of literary figures who have, on the whole, been regarded in Western studies either as subjects for biography or as objects of exclusively "literary" attention.

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Chasing Pushkin's coat-tails

By Kyril FitzLyon

ALEXANDER PUSHKIN :
Eugene Onegin
Translated by Charles Johnston
Introduction by John Bayley
238pp. Penguin. £1.50.
0 14 044 394 0

CHARLES JOHNSTON :
Poems and Journeys
Including a new translation of "Onegin's Journey" by Alexander Pushkin with an introduction by Peter Levi
97pp. £3.90.
Rivers and Fireworks
Including "Evening Light on the Moselle" as described by Ausonius and "The Demon" by Michael Lermontov
Introduction by Igor Vinogradoff
71pp. £4.50.
Bodley Head for Charles Johnston
0 370 30334 2

When Charles Johnston's translation of Pushkin's Eugene Onegin first came out—in 1977—it was met with unanimous and excited praise. Critics said it was "near perfect", "a miracle", even "a recreation" and "within hailing distance of the original". To me this last seems the highest praise of all. As translator, particularly of poetry, has a right to aspire to more or, indeed, expect as much. The Johnston translation has now been published in the Penguin Classics series with a few slight revisions and an introduction by John Bayley, who is his usual stimulating self. To find Bayley stimulating does not, of course mean complete agreement with all he says. (He writes, for instance, that Pushkin's wife "may have been for a short while *mademoiselle en titre* to the Tsar". Had she been, there would surely have been no "maybe" about it. Else what does "*en titre*" mean?) But he rightly suggests that *Eugene Onegin* has a certain framework which Pushkin—though he had, of course, imposed it himself in the first place—was unable to transgress. Bayley is referring to *Onegin's Journey* which was published separately after the main poem had reached its natural conclusion and the ship, to borrow Pushkin's own suggested image, had safely come to port.

The combination of Eugene Onegin's success, a critic's advice and his own natural inclination urged Pushkin to re-equip the ship and let it sail again, but the inner logic of the poem proved too strong and Pushkin abandoned the attempt after several stanzas—"fragments", he called them—to which he added stanzas he had written a few years previously describing his own stay in Odessa. The *Journey* is linked to *Eugene Onegin* by the recipe supplied in stanza 1 of the first chapter, a mixture of imaginary and living characters (including the author himself), the sparkle and the gaiety, all expressed in a language which is both colloquial and vivid. And yet the result is not entirely satisfactory. The mechanism works, certainly, but somehow it remains—a mechanism. The fact that this is reflected in Charles Johnston's translation shows what a faithful translation it is. His skill is truly remarkable. Here is Pushkin's description, in Johnston's rendering, of mercantile Odessa on a weekday morning:

The square has swarmed. You look about it—
it comes to life; and like a gamo
they run, on business or without it,
mostly so business all the sumo.
Offspring of risk and circumspection,
the merchant goes on an inspection
of flags, to see if heaven's consigned
him sails he knows. He wants to find
each cargo that's just been imported
and registered in quarantine.
Has the wine shipment yar been seen?
What plagues, what fires have been reported?
Is there no famine or no war,
or nothing new like that in store?

The extent to which Charles Johnston has been able to absorb Pushkin can be measured by his ov : verse: when he comes to write it rather than translate other people's, he seems to be most at ease in his Pushkinoid strain, as, for instance, in his fairly long poem "In Praise of Gusto" in the same volume (*Poems and Journeys*). However, like all generalizations, this is only partly true. In his latest collection, *Rivers and Fireworks*, he includes his "A Footnote to Housman" which, for all its gaiety and wit, owes nothing to Pushkin, but may well find its way to some future Anthology of Light Verse, if only for expressing the widespread view that "To reach the top flight as a poet/you must write an unreadable work,/ so obscure that your friends will forgo it/and all but the bravest will shirk". On this view Housman's reputation has suffered from ignoring this rule, and, therefore, "To learn from the fault he committed/is the first of poetical cares./ Lucid intervals may be admitted,/ but be lucid the whole time who dares".

Pushkin, of course, *has* dared and, suitably therefore, *Rivers and Fireworks* starts with a dedication to Pushkin. In it the author humbly recognizes the possibility that his translation from the Russian poet may, in fact, be superior to his own verse. "Always", he says, "it would have been my choice/to own a separate English voice/But if by doing my own thing/ I can't get listeners when I sing,/great Bard, I'll ride in on your back—/or chase the coattails of your *frac*".

The use of *frac* is particularly apposite since it parodies Pushkin's mock complaint in *Eugene Onegin* that he is obliged to use that foreign French word for want of a Russian equivalent in describing his hero's dress. In fact, however, adapting the first simile, it can be said that Charles Johnston is an excellent rider who does not cling to the same horse. He likes changing his poetic steeds, though mostly they come from the same or similar stables in the sense that the poets he chooses, whether ancient or modern, classical or romantic, nearly all show a strong streak of realism. This is certainly true of Ausonius, the fourth-century Roman rhetorician, administrator and poet, whose verses are included in *Rivers and Fireworks*, and even of the long poem by Lermontov, the nineteenth-century Russian poet and soldier, here translated as "The Demon". It is not, of course, true of Rainer Maria Rilke, the translation of whose "The Last Evening" preserves the tremulous ambiguity of the original.

Ausonius has Pushkin's ability to transmute everyday events into verbal pictures that impress themselves on our imagination, as, for instance, in "Evening Light on the Moselle" in Charles Johnston's splendid translation:

The glancous current mirrors the darkening ridge:
leaves sprout from water's surface,
till the river
is svergrown with vines. And then
the shoals—
what colour are they, when late
evening lengthens
the shadows, and prints sut on the Moselle
o whole green mountain! How the hillside swims,
swims on the nervous surface, and reflected
from far away the vine is trembling, and
a full grape cluster swells in the glassy stream!

The translation of Lermontov's poem is the main feature of this collection and accounts for two thirds of it. It is, for all that, shorter than *Eugene Onegin*, though, in a sense, it is more ambitious because more difficult to accomplish satisfactorily. It was written (mainly in the 1830s) in the high noon of Russian Romanticism and is, therefore, itself less in tune with modern taste (and certainly less so) than the more sober vision of *Eugene Onegin*. The theme is that of Lucifer's love for a beautiful Georgian girl who tries to escape from him by becoming a nun, but finally succumbs to his passionate pleas, offers of supernatural delights and promises of his own regeneration—in one of the most famous passages in all Russian poetry, unfortunately too long to quote, here in Johnston's transcription. After her death, however, Satan is deprived of his prey by an angel of God who carries off her soul in triumph.

I regret, I must admit, Johnston's decision to follow other English translations of the poem in rendering the Russian word *Demon* by Demon. The *Demon* in Lermontov's poem surely corresponds to Lucifer or Satan, the latter being preferable in a translation for the sake of the metre (same number of syllables with the stress on the first one). "Demon" in English seems to me nor the fallen archangel, the great and unique adversary of God, but something almost (if not quite) akin to a poltergeist, a mischievous little sprite, one of many. Indeed Johnston appears to suggest such a multiplicity by starting the poem with the indefinite article: "A Demon, son of all the benighted . . .". Yet later on in the poem this particular Demon emerges as "the King of freedom and cognition", promising to make his beloved "queen of the world" and chide, should he but will it, to abolish evil "altogether by making his peace with God. The story, in fact, is based on an old Georgian legend according to which Lucifer's love for a mortal woman, if genuine and genuinely reciprocated, would redeem him in the sight of God and, since he would once again become one of God's archangels, evil would disappear from the world: "and, may the world, calm, unshaving/flourish untrubled by my hand", as Johnston translates it. The name Lucifer seems to me of fundamental importance for the poem's inner consistency and thematic cohesion, though it is doubtful whether such a consideration is likely to affect the average reader's enjoyment.

In the original the poem is saved from bombast and sentimentality by the simplicity and naturalness of the language (miraculously combined with sublimity) and—in spite of the fantastic story—by the realism of detail. (One critic has suggested that its descriptions of the landscape could serve as a topographical guide to the Caucasus.) In English this is made particularly difficult by the greater rigidity of accepted phrasing; the sequence of words in a sentence is allowed far less latitude than in Russian, and hence what in English may be an intolerably artificial inversion sounds perfectly normal in Russian. And yet inversion in English is often imposed by (or, at least, offers a tempting solution to) the exigencies of rhyme in which the English language, being uninflected, is naturally much poorer than Russian with its regular case-endings. Charles Johnston avoids these pitfalls much more successfully than any of his predecessors. Though he believes (wrongly, I think) that Lermontov's language is theatrical and stilted—"buskinned" he calls it—he very fortunately refrains from acting on this erroneous belief, jettisons all the paraphernalia of "o'er" and "ne'" and "avaunt" and "bath" and the second person singular, obligatory in other translations it would seem, and emerges with something much nearer the spoken language of today, which is itself a very considerable achievement.

Fruits of division

By Gavin Ewart

EDWIN MORGAN (Editor) :
Scottish Satirical Verse
An Anthology
236pp. Carcanet. £6.95 (Paperback, £3.95).
0 85635 183 0

In his introduction to *Scottish Satirical Verse*, Edwin Morgan writes of Scotland's "two deep self-inflicted wounds—Calvinism and the Union". It is, because of this, a divided country (divided, too, into Highlands and Lowlands) where self-criticism comes as naturally as criticism of a traditional enemy like England. This is a good climate for satire; and, as Morgan says, there are examples of every kind, from mild to fierce, in Scottish poetry. It is certainly true that, if the English exploited the Scots, the Scots too exploited the English. Scots, or Lallans, or anything spoken or written in Scotland that is not Gaelic, is basically Standard English with a prepondevance of dialect words and phrases. Some of these words are marvellous: "wallidrag" for instance (a waakling), or "whigmaleerie" (a whimsical fancy). No Gaelic verse is included in this anthology, and there is a nice long glossary; but the Southornar is still left to guess that *baneat* means a banquet, and *sindyd*, presumably, a smithy. A "fenyait frair" is a feigned Friar. "Three times the Cartina grain'd and rifted" means "Three times the Hag groaned and belched". In the Home Counties such things are not well known.

The early poems were often narratives—fables were one form (eg. Henryson's "The Fox and the Wolf"). The shortness and epigrammatic sharpness of "The Bewtiss Of The Fute-ball" ("brissit brawols and brokin banis") an unusual. The greatest of all, though owing a lot to Chaucer's "Wife Of Bath's Prologue", is Dunbar's *The Treats of the Tua Maritt Wemen and the Wedo*, 530 lines of inspired poetry.

From the alliteration of this poem we move into the rhyme of Sir David Lyndsay, the long shopping-list of diseases and disabilities wished upon Polwart by Alaxander Montgomerie (the only flyting included), William Drummond, Allan Ramsay and Robert Fergusson. The stanza later used by Burns appears here for the first time. Burns's own satire is social satire rather than personal, far more mellifluous, and strikes a deeper note with its characteristic generosity. Kingsley Amis excluded Burns from his *New Oxford Book of Light Verse*, giving as his reason that "his distinctive tone or manner . . . is still not light, but carries instead what I will call a genial gravity". "Holy Willie's Prayer", however, is satire and certainly not heavy; the "Address to the Deil", perhaps, is more genial, "When princes and prelates" is hawdy. James Hogg wrote true light verse—Just funny, but *is* it funny; and "Sir Morgan O'Doherty's Farewell to Scotland" has its share of anti-Scottish venom. Sir Walter Scott's "Proud Moisie", a beautiful lyric, is less a satire than a reflection on the vanity of human wishes.

Alexandar Rodger, a very talented versifier, shows the Scottish aversion to gentility of language:

Mak your lik-fand bullie core
Fu' down behint him—not before,
His great posterior to adore,
Sewney, now the klog's came.
George IV—wouldn't you know?
From William Thom on the decline of weeving as a cottage industry ("Sunronie to rags, ye weave, in tears,/ The shinning robe now murderers' wears") and Charles Lord Neavos on the dismalness of the Sabbath (the first Standard English poem in the book) we come to the twentieth century.

There is no falling-off here. MacDiarmid's famous passage from "A Drunk Man Looks At The Thistle" about Chinese Scorsmon and the pseudo-Scottiicism of Burns Clubs, William Soutar's ballad-style "The Hungry Mauchs" (maggots), Robert Garioch, very funny and apt, Norman MacCaig who writes "Wild Oats", and Edwin Morgan himself:

and then I remembar that aardonio voice
pausing in its anatomy lesson to say
why heads of kings come
off so easily.

Alastair Mackie writes very effective *vers libre* in "Beethoven's Chunty" (chamber-pot). According to him, the "Scots' Pegasus" is only a wooden horse ("He ettles tee flee/ but his intimmers are fu o the deid-check."). W. Price Turner has fives very sharp and enjoyable English poems. Tom Buchan's "Scotland the wee" ("land of the millionaire draper, whisky vomit/ and the Hillman Imp") owes something to Cummings's poem about Amerira ("land of the Cluet/ Shirt Boston Garter and Spearmint/ Girl with the Wrigley Eyes"). "Letter from a Partisan" very successfully uses an Auden technique (see "Under Which Lyre"), Alan Jackson scores heavily with "Edinburgh Scene":

we used to be typists
but tha hell wi' that
now we live with these boye
in a two room flat

we've never washed for ages
we sleep on bits of sack
we've both lost wir pants
and we dinna want them back

the boys are a big beardies
they think we're awfy sweet
we never know which one we're with
that'o what it means to be beat

Materialism, commonsense, plain speaking, bawdiness, wryness, anti-Puritanism, are common to all the poems in this anthology, from the earliest to the latest.

The Twa Twinkies

An Auld Sang in Butterscotts[1]

Twe twinkies[2] set upon a stane
'Til mae flurkit eff in rage an[3] pain,
Loevand the ither on his lane
Wi' scronfie sniyy.
All disunnily did he complain
Tae winds sae niry :

" Yon fliptrip gnas an' gars me wae
An' snimples that she has t' gae,
She cannn thrufe one ward I say!
I cinckit serenely—
She threw at me a channing-dray!
Aye, sic nubienly!

Yet iv'ry word that's in my mou'
My Daddie flouked when he war fou'
As nat'ral as the auld brown cow',
As Scots as parritch!
Yon hndna pit, she cleinit, ane clue
Fre here tee Horwich!

Auld Scots, weil kennit as the kail,
Intil her wits oon couldnn haill—
Her understandin' aye wes smail'—
Braw Scotland's glory,
She feered it as 'twere buttock-mail,
A liggend story!

Wi' muckle mudge ownes yon did furk
Nae sense on airth could wer hirk
There like a mneupit mudnawurk—
My wards gnr'd baill,
As far frae her as Greek or Turk
Or bleirit Broille!

In sic a case she's left me, sighand,
My warklum leit sae high an' dry and
Wheur kin I mova? For want' o' tryand
I'll not gae bedwards
Laitesome; she's Snuth, wi' Bills an' Brians
Georges en' Edwards!

See ye menn mak a kirk or mitt o't,
The haift jing-bang! She's chaipt. Her billet
Is roch oneugh, lak thet o' gillot;
I'm troubled soir,
Wi' my braw speek—she's ta'en her flit o't—
She'll live nae mair!"

Gavin Ewart

[1] Mr Ian Hamilton has described this as the dialect used by the ancient butterscotch-makers in the Tolbooth (a form of forced labour).
[2] An obsolete bird, according to some authorities.
[3] A dialect word for "eye".
[4] smir (a dialect form).

commentary

Revising stereotypes

By Michael Mason

Heart Beat
Gate Two Cinema, Brunswick Square

Heart Beat, which received disastrous notices in America, is attracting large audiences in London: it seems to be one of those cases of a good American film whose inertia are more adequately recognized in Britain. It is about Jack Kerouac and his legendary friend Neal Cassady, and the American critics have persistently complained that it does not depict Kerouac's life as the novels and biographies do—as if the highly intelligent director James Byrum (his previous film, *Inserts*, was even too intelligent for its own good) might have diverged from the orthodox account unwittingly, stumbling benightedly off course.

Photographs of writers of the recent past often, disconcertingly, make their subjects look more wholesome and respectable than we expect. Most photographs of Beckett, of Burroughs, and of Kerouac himself (at least until the late 1950s) carry this kind of shock. Clearly the effect has a variety of explanations, and some of them are adventitious: changes in the tokens of respectability, for example (a suit and tie denotes it more strongly today than thirty years ago; just after the war, short hair was outré), even changes in the prevailing idea of the camera's job. Byrum's film intimates and investigates the photographs. It tries to identify, in a particular case, how much is truthful in the conservative and unhip quality of these images.

With the actor playing Kerouac, Byrum has a startling point of striking visual accuracy. John Heard looks just like certain photographs of him and suggests throughout the cleanly handsome, athletic quality of the man (there is no sign of the slightly adipose buttocks that could be glimpsed in this gifted actor's last important film, *Between the Lines*). Stressing what a contemporary called the "Arrow-collar-ad-type" in Kerouac's looks may remind us of the widely known, but less widely mentioned, conservative phase in Kerouac's attitudes: he strongly opposed the political radicalism of the 1960s in America, and publicly espoused the views of William F. Buckley, Jr.

Kerouac was by all accounts reserved, certainly not flamboyant—and by making John Heard so represent him Byrum also implies a truth about him as a writer. A scene in the film which the American critics especially dislike has Kerouac crunching with his writing materials, pensive, on the floor of a lavatory while a vomiting junky repeatedly and calmly puts the porcelain to use. This well conveys what the director has called the "rayonnistic" side of Kerouac—which is one way of specifying the genre of his writing. Kerouac's fiction consists almost entirely of minute, often brilliantly lively reminiscence. A great theme with his friends, when consulted by the biographers, is that in his writing Kerouac accurately recalled episodes which they thought him oblivious to (especially, in the last years, on the ground that he was drunk). What would be the somatic equivalent of the engaging inane babblings of *Sal Paradise* or *Ray Smith* anyway? *On the Road* and *The Dharma Bums* are impish texts; an truthful image of Kerouac, authentic or artificial, could resemble the image who uttered his best novels.

Nick Nolte, playing Neal Cassady, is visually a much less faithful piece of casting. And here Byrum's revision of the stereotypes pushes to extremes. Cassady was the most developed type of the sexually perverted and roistering, violent personality that the Kerouac coterie revered. Kerouac had to emit from *On the Road* the episode of Cassady roughly sodomizing another man in a public lavatory while the unrelist, voyeuristically, looks on. In *Heart Beat* Cassady is depicted as an amiable, moderately licentious fellow who readily settles down (only for a time, it is true, but in violation of the fantasy of suburban domesticity with Carolyn Cassady in a newly built house) Carolyn Cassady is acted by Sissy Spacek, and her real-life view of Kerouac and Cassady is represented in the film by a mindless voice-over narration voiced by her (this: incidentally, is exactly like those of the narration delivered by Sissy Spacek in Terrence Malick's *Badlands*, a work were surely suggested by it).

There may be an element of resentful refusal by Byrum to admit that Cassady was as sexually sophisticated as he really seems to have been. The theme of *Inserts* is that impotence underlies pornography, and *Heart Beat* does not a continued peevish attack on sexual heroics. There is nevertheless a kind of truth here about Kerouac and Cassady, like the film stars of the time, had those multiple, temporary marriages which now seem so inexplicable. Kerouac's case episodes of six months which actually put up in quite prosperous nonsexual relationships. There is, perhaps, a case of change in the idea of respectability—like the way Kerouac wave to sign copies of his novels for the public.

But even if Byrum's allegation of conservatism against Kerouac and Cassady do not all stick, the film can remind us that these two people are not our contemporaries and dispel the illusion that the way of life, however recently it was ours.

Dilettantism and *realpolitik*

By Richard Combs

The Third Generation
Electric Cinema, Portobello Road

The mood of *The Third Generation*, one might assume, is rampaging cynicism. The film looks in two directions, at the modern capitalist state of West Germany and at the terrorist radicals who believe it, and seems to pronounce a curse on both their houses. Such a feat is possible, however, not because the film is two-faced but because the situation it describes is so complex: the state and the terrorists belong together, because the terrorists give the state an excuse for defining and defending itself in ever more totalitarian fashion. Such interdependence is suggested in the film's first scene, where an industrialist presiding in his glass tower over Berlin past and present, the city centre church which is a relic of the war, and the rebuilt metropolis around it), discusses computerized security systems and the current state of the market for them, which is depressed because there have been no new terrorist incidents.

In cut and dried terms, this is the message of Fassbinder's latest film. But it does not account for some of its most curious features, not least of which is that it is more emotionally than politically painful. Although some historical long view of the German experience is unfolded, the film actually works as a claustrophobically intense soap opera, a black farce of political mannerisms or, as an opening title puts it, "a comedy in six parts, about party games, full of suspense, excitement and logic, horror and madness . . ."

As Fassbinder sees it, the ambiguity is there in the title. The third generation, he has said, might be "the German middle class between 1848 and 1933, our grandfathers and how they experienced the Third Reich and what they remember of it, our fathers who, after the war, had the opportunity to build a nation which could have been more human and free than any that had gone before, and what this opportunity subsequently disintegrated into". But it might also be the third generation of terrorists, who Fassbinder sees as having reduced old revolutionary idealisms and commitment into the politics of narcissistic cliques, bourgeois adventurers and poseurs.

It is no wonder, then, that the film seems such a riotous knockabout, since all the generations have been let loose in it. One family group includes a grandfather who discounts the waffle of relativist philosophers and invokes positive thinkers like Nietzsche, and the value of war in turning up morality in general. His son is a policeman, whose philosophy is a cynical *realpolitik* about his role as the watchdog of capital, and his son in turn is the most neurotically insecure of the dilettantish cell of subversives with which the film is mainly concerned. In this light, it is hardly surprising that the stout and the terrorists are literal brothers-in-law: the policeman father is having an affair with his son's wife (the regular Fassbinder actress Hanna Schygulla), who is a civil secretary to the industrialist (Eddie Constantine) we see at the beginning.

The film's action, too, is all in the family. The members of the cell are domestic monsters first and political actors second, and reserve their scorn for the new member who is still burdened with his suitcase of revolutionary theory. What the discussion of theory boils down to in the end is the old Fassbinder problem of victimization: his peculiar sense of doom about personal and social relations in which everyone alternately plays out the roles of victim and victimizer. It is his own theory of the territorial imperative, the need to dominate, and most often takes the form of sexual charades. Significantly, the terrorist who turns out to be a police agent, and who periodically visits the industrialist in drag for his pay-off, is played by Volker Spengler, whom Fassbinder has also cast recently (in *In a Year with 13 Moons*) as the trans-sexual victim of just about every shade of terrorism.

If the characters' personal situations are vicious circles, then their chances of changing anything politically are even more remote. It is a stagnation which one often feels has overwhelmed the film itself, although Fassbinder actively denies morbid introspection even as his characters sink into it. It is difficult in the end to reduce *The Third Generation* to a single message, simply because it squeezes in so much contradictory communication: written texts, from political speeches to toilet-wall graffiti, and a constant babble of audio-visual interference. As *Despair* and *The Marriage of Maria Braun* have proved, Fassbinder can be as indulgent on "art-house" director as any. *The Third Generation* is made of sterner and more consistently challenging stuff.

Fifty years on . . .

In the TLS of September 18, 1930, R. Chauvin reviewed Paul Rotha's The Film Till Now:

. . . It has been obvious, however, for a good many years that, for all practical purposes, there is nothing whatever to be gained by considering the aesthetic theories of the film apart from the conditions in which it is produced, distributed and exhibited. The commercial exploitation of the film is not a mere accident; it has always been, and will probably continue to be, the governing factor in its aesthetic and technical development. There is no need to labour the point at this time of day, though it may be well to suggest, with regard to the virtual monopoly in the film world which the United States enjoys, that control appears to be passing from the industry itself to high finance and the giant industry associated with the newest invention in the cinema. Mr Rotha refers in passing to the combination of American interests in the film, the gramophone, wireless and television, and to the effect this may have on future developments in the cinema; but much more remains to be said today of the financial conditions which shape the course of film production. His own way of emphasizing the distinction between art and commerce in the cinema is to divide his volume into two unequal parts, the first, which is much the lengthier, being entitled "the actual", while the other is aptly described as "the theoretical". As a further instance of the difficulty of discussing the film without reference to its purely commercial aspect, it is worth noting that Mr Rotha has almost nothing to say about the talking film except that it is inartistic. Continuous dialogue in the cinema, he says, destroys the film's illusion and is a great weariness to the intelligent film-goer; he believes that synchronized speech will be abandoned in time and that a technique of "sound images" corresponding to the technique of the visual image, will be evolved in the studio. We are a long way from sharing his belief. The talking film might not exist in an ideal cinema, but it does exist today. And there is not the slightest reason for supposing, film magnates and popular taste being what they are, that it will have ceased to exist tomorrow. "The Film Till Now" is an odd title for a book which refuses to consider the experiments which have been the mainstay of the talking film in the last couple of years.

The historical part of the book is very well done. After a concise summary of the experimental phase in the history of the film, Mr Rotha passes to the development of Hollywood to a stage when, by a kind of natural selection, it has been dealing with individual films and the film industry as two distinct entities like Gottlieb, Chaplin, Lubitsch, Lubitsch, von Stroheim, others . . . . A good deal of gossip creeps into the text, of course, but it undoubtedly helps the reader to understand the environment in which the industry is conducted in an shameless and grotesque system of publicity. The American survey is followed by reviews of the progress of film production in Russia, Germany, France and England. The Russian and German sections are excellent: summaries of contain the most interesting part of the story. There are few people interested in the cinema who will dispute with the author's selection of *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* made in 1920, and *The Cruiser Potemkin* made in 1925, as the two films which have contributed most at all to the development of a genuinely "cinematic" or "filmic" form of art . . . .

T·L·S Children's books

Literature by beginners

By Victoria Glendinning

Children As Writers
Award-winning entries from the 1979 W. H. Smith Children's Literary Competition
Heinemann. £2.50.
0 435 13410 8

Nearly 30,000 individual entries were received for the twenty-first W. H. Smith Children's Literary Competition, and *Children as Writers* is a collection of over seventy award-winning entries, in verse and prose, varying in length from four lines to twelve pages. It is much easier to respond to the short contributions; but just why is it that one prefers "children's writing" to be brief? Maybe it is because one knows from experience that nearly all young children are capable of the magic image or the wise-self insight, but that few are concerned with form. Their stories tend to be accumulations of incident ("... and then ... and then ...") with arbitrary endings arbitrarily imposed. When children are garrulous they are every bit as boring—in their own way—as garrulous adults, and courtesy unfortunately does not constrain us to put up with it to quite the same extent. And it could be argued that people have to learn not to be boring, just as they have to learn "when to go" when they are in someone else's house. There is such a thing as literary tact.

Yet this grudging appreciation is a mere twelve pages is grotesque. Probably all rationalization is an excuse. It may be that we all too readily appreciate a child's "cuteness" but are horribly unwilling to give him extended attention, in print as in real life: "Mum, you're not *listening properly*."

But even listening properly, the heart and mind do go out less readily to a perfectly decent tale about an old lady, a little girl and a cat, than to this stanza by an eight-year-old:

I always used to catch the mice
But today I keep my claws inside my paws
And let the mice go through to Jesus,
It's a very special day today.

This is peculiarly intriguing since "going to Jesus" is what one would expect the poor mice to do if the cat *failed* to keep its claws inside its paws. In the midst of death we are in life. Cats are the subject of no least half a dozen offerings; they seem to fire the imagination more than do man's allegedly best friend; and, perhaps surprisingly, there are no girlish hymns to horses. A seven-year-old writes strikingly well about a cheetah—

A very guinea-pig by Andrew John Hawderson, of Crawfordton House School—from the book reviewed here.

A cheetah has metal girder teeth
it goes hurling down through the jungle
throwing out its fear
—though fear is not uppermost in the minds of these children, even when they write, as many do, about night and darkness. Another seven-year-old:

The moon and stars glitter like
the juice of a lemon against
the indigo sky.

It is questionable however whether these perceptions arranged in poetry-lines have much to do with poetry or an understanding of poetry, as apart from an understanding of the "poetic". A child of nine once wrote a description of a wood. His teacher rearranged it in lines, pinned it up on the board, and told him he had written a poem. Irritated, he said he had not, and he was right.

The age-range in this collection spans huge developmental differences. The youngest award-winner is three and a half, the eldest sixteen. How can their work be compared? Puberty cuts through the centre of the collection like a sound-barrier, and once the barrier has been crossed the writing may be good or bad but it is doubtful whether there's any point in classifying it as "children's writing". By the time Pope was seventeen, after all, his "Pastorals" were in draft.

What happens in adolescence is that children suddenly find they have access to at least the vocabulary and the manner of adult writing. It is rather like what happens, at a much earlier stage, to children's drawing, when they lose contact with their magic and irrational private vision and begin making conventionalized representations of houses and people, all too often cramped and unspontaneous. This always seems a loss, for it is some time before they—or the gifted ones anyway—find their individuality again. The same thing happens in writing. The children have read more, and heard their teachers express admiration for certain authors. They become aware of "beauty" in language; they become self-conscious; the intelligent ones can easily acquire a conventionalized idea of what "writing" is. As a fourteen-year-old puts it here in a poem called "The Novel", they

Work for style and technique
Place a word sensibly,
And surround it by a meaning.

Before they can find their own meanings and their own talent, most young writers borrow other people's. There are some extremely competent pastiches in this collection. A First World War poem by a boy of fifteen for example, called "Of a Harvest in 1914":

The mayday of innocence was
battered, forlorn, forgotten,
The meadow of rabbits and new-mown hay
Lies sombre, only the poppy
knowing the last lament. . . .

Or sometimes a young writer will experiment with a particular verbal device that has caught his imagination, bringing it to life before working it to death:

He charges, robin-breasted
Through well-weeded and sodden
Rain-trodden fields.
To daily at the dilldilled den
Where deer sleep,
Shell-eared and moon-eyed. . . .
Larkmad and catwild
Lord of the lonely hills.

Cheerful echoes of James Bond and the upper reaches of sci-fi and magazine fiction run through some of the prose pieces, and a fifteen-year-old boy produces a sexually sophisticated fantasy that Roald Dahl might not be ashamed of having written. As for as the older writers' own attitudes can be deduced, they are the classic zones of adolescence: hatred—real hatred—of nagging adults, with fantasies of running away from school or home, but always coming back in the end. One sixteen-year-old writes a short story about marriage that reveals her to be as disillusioned and pessimistic about that state as any tired housewife.

These young writers are—as one imagines they were not two decades ago, when these series began—very frank about physical things. There is a good prose piece about the mystification surrounding the onset of menstruation, by a girl of fifteen. And there are two very remarkable poems by a fourteen-year-old boy called Gareth Pownall, one about birth, the other "The Homesick Abortion":

Feeding and sleeping,
Slowly,
I grew my frail roots to her.
Her blood like lilac wine . . . .
With the strict economy of agony,
They flung me in a plastic bag.
And watched as my convulsion ceased.
Shimmering sex as I died young.

Innocence too dies young for the children, now. Another line of Gareth Pownall's suggests the price they pay: "The sad shining of knowing tears". The young are brave and they are not frivolous. Nevertheless one of the major award-winners, Darrin Prescott (13) from Birmingham, has perpetrated an inspired piece of frivolity:

I was holidaying in Sweden
When I came across this headline
In a Chinese newspaper:
Bank job committed by vicar's
Daughter's step-brother
A well-known flirt at a famous
London Hardware store . . .

which continues for twenty-two surrealist and high-spirited stanzas.

But the other major prize-winner, fifteen-year-old Katie Neville from Manchester, has the passionate seriousness of adolescence:

I would have my name said of the
End of every truth seen,
I would have my name sung at the
End of revolution won.
I would like to say I was rebellion
And I was peace and I was saviour,
But I am fit only for temporary strength,
Because I am shame and I am sore,
And I am child and I am never knowing,
I am to be left and I am never to cry.

Her four poems are among the most articulate, and self-traveling in the book; she typically wants to be known, yet resists the people who try to know her:

You scrabbled through my inwords
to find the heart button, you
pressed it with contempt . . .
and I would have myself believe
that I wanted you to make me not alone.

Although in another poem she writes that "I spent the night with dreams of you", there is in Miss Neville as in nearly all the young writers represented here an explicit wariness about romantic love. She writes:

That love is probably a tale
created by old wives,
created for they had nothing
(and you will have nothing)
but the dream of love or being without pain,
(I think the children should be told, don't you?)

I think "the children" know already. And so, paradoxically, they may stand a much better chance of having "the dream of love" come true.

Configurations of childhood

By Peter Fuller

HOWARD GARDNER :
Artful Scribbles
The Significance of Children's Drawings
Jill Norman. £3.95.
0 906908 28 0

We are used to children's drawings. We see them on the walls of schools and homes, on book covers and even on cereal packets. Painting and drawing seem as much part of childhood as milk-teeth. But child art was not always accepted in this way. As Howard Gardner writes in this book: "One looks in vain through prehistory, classical accounts, and even writings at the time of the Renaissance for conclusive evidence that children drew, let alone that such drawing mattered." There are just two exceptions: a child's slate bearing a figure which survives from Minoan times, and a sixteenth century portrait, by Caroto, of a boy holding a child's drawing of a man.

Interest in children's drawings grew with the gradual recognition of childhood itself. But there is surprisingly little significant literature on the subject. One great exception is the work of Rhoda Kellogg, a self-taught, American school-teacher who collected hundreds of thousands of children's drawings from all over the world and developed systematic classifications of their elements. Kellogg saw that children's art went through stages (characterized by specific forms and combinations of forms) which varied with age and development rather than culture. Certain features, like the achievement of the mandala (a roughly circular shape crossed with lines) seemed to her to be almost universal.

But study of children's drawings has been divided between two main camps. One is interested in interpreting drawings as a means of access into the child's inner world. (Jungians have done some particularly woolly work of this kind.) But this sort of approach rarely manifests much interest in children's drawing as such. On the other hand, cognitive psychologists have studied such things as organization, sequence and the principles of thrift and conservatism in child art. (Jacqueline Goodnow's *Children's Drawing* is a summary of such research.) Clearly, it is of some interest to ask such questions as whether a child who learns a language which runs from right to left across the page also works the other way around the clock when attaching arms and legs in a circular figure. Nonetheless, I have never been able to convince myself that it is of much interest.

Rudolf Arnheim is one writer who has fallen into neither of these reductionisms. But he is really interested in children's drawings only insofar as they illuminate his psychology of art. For example, a young child will draw a figure as a circle, with arms and legs immediately attached. Arnheim argues that the child is drawing a complete figure through the circle and in a sense "leaving off" the body. Such a view certainly fits well with Gestalt preconceptions; but it leaves out of account the disproportionate expressive significance of the face, which is reflected not just in the earliest experiences of infancy but also in the earliest attempts at artistic expression.

Howard Gardner is a pupil of Arnheim's, for whom he has full some praise. But his own approach is rather different. Gardner argues that children's drawings can only be understood in terms of the development of the child as a whole. Although a cognitive psychologist by training, he therefore concentrates on what have hitherto been relatively ignored aspects of children's art. These include the reasons why child drawing follows its characteristic course; the precise relations between this and other aspects of mental, social and emotional development; and the aesthetic status of child art.

However, having set himself such a promising project, Gardner manages to botch it thoroughly. Take the way in which he invokes the comparison between child and primate art. Desmond Morris was among the first to compare the developmental sequence of children's drawings with that of a chimpanzee who is taught to paint. Morris found that when child and ape were between one and a half and three years old their work followed very similar trajectories; they then very quickly began to diverge just before those developments which, in the child, led to the first representations.

Recently, however, Morris's findings have been challenged by the (to me) unpersuasive claims of two researchers that their ape, Moja, has been making "representational" works. Clearly, all this is gripping stuff: it promises to throw more and more light on the nature and origins of the specifically human capacity for expressive symbolization. But how does Gardner deal with such pivotal issues? He gestures, vaguely, in the direction of the conflicting research and then comments, unhelpfully, "We may well want to retain some skepticism about the testimony of young Moja . . . Yet . . . it would be a bold scientist indeed who would dare to place chimpanzees forever from the world of representational art!" Again and again at those critical points when one wants exposition and argument all that Gardner can offer is rhetoric or sentiment.

Indeed, Gardner has an almost pathological wish to accommodate everyone's points of view, even when they are at odds with each other. For example, for most of the book, he appears to accept, at least in outline, Kellogg's cross-cultural developmental sequence. It thus comes as a considerable shock to discover on page 159 that Gardner is aware of work by a cultural anthropologist, Alexander Alland, which is entirely at odds with Kellogg's, challenges her relative constants (like the mandala) and suggests that cultural factors are decisive even in works by the youngest children. Gardner reproduces three pictures (presumably provided by Alland) by children from Mali, Taiwan, and Japan, which, at first glance, tend to confirm this thesis.

Now, if Alland is right, all the "classical" work which has been done in this field will be effectively rendered obsolete. Gardner, however, refers to his findings as just another interesting opinion among many. Unfortunately, the reader has no way of arriving at a just assessment of the provocative heresy, since Gardner merely tells us in a footnote that Professor Alland told him about his findings in conversation. Moreover, information is given neither about the ages of the three youngsters who made the culture-ridden paintings, nor about how their work was selected. My own guess (and it can be no better than that) is that these are exceptional works, carefully selected to "make a point", whereas Kellogg, of course, based her findings on truly massive samples.

Gardner is very much more convincing when he is dealing with educational issues—like the vexed question of the value of copying. Copying has been out of favour in art education in recent years, but Gardner argues that, if it is introduced at a certain stage of development, and not over-rightly imposed, it can provide an important bridge between drawing as a "natural" expressive activity and participation in the pictorial traditions of one's own culture. As someone who has had reason to question the laissez faire liberalism of art education over the past two decades (which has led to severe erosion of basic skills) I read Gardner's views with relief.

If a hundred years ago, child art was ignored, today it is often held up as the model of all artistic activity. Yet the expressive materials of the successful, adult artist include culturally given pictorial conventions. Copying is one of the means through which one can become acquainted with them.

But, having made this point, Gardner is also right to raise the issue of the exceptions, those rare prodigies who seem to short-circuit the routes to skills given only by acquaintance with tradition, and to acquire them as natural facilities. A famous example is that of Nadia, an autistic child who suddenly began to produce fluent drawings of animals and horses using elaborate graphic devices that are usually only he acquired through extensive training. However, nothing of significance is added to the literature on Nadia with Gardner's suggestion that she "may have been operating with a high-powered mental computational device—seldom, if ever, exploited by other, but perhaps available to at least a sample of the human species."

Even less satisfactory are those parts of this book in which Gardner attempts an aesthetic analysis of child art. Gardner clearly does not know much about aesthetic theory and has chosen to entangle himself with the argument put forward by Suzi Gablik that there has been no consistent progress in Western art. Miss Gablik apparently believes that contemporary conceptual, linguistic and systematic art forms (which do not make use of pictures) are actually better than, say, the work of Raphael or Leonardo, which do.

Gablik argues that the historical development of Western art thus parallels the growth to maturity of the child, away from primitive "iconic", towards linguistic modes. All this is, I believe, muddle-headed nonsense, and if you begin a discussion on the aesthetics of child art by considering such a claim you will get nowhere. This is a pity, since Gardner is right to be puzzled that the aesthetic feelings raised by child art are intriguing. Could it be that we enjoy children's drawings more in the way that we like wild flowers than for the reasons we find, say, Poussin aesthetically satisfying?

I believe that an interesting book could have been written of the kind that Gardner promised, but failed to deliver. His work is weak because although he says he is going to situate children's art in the context of the child's development as a whole, he has an impoverished conception of such development. He seems to know little of the exacting work of Professor Vernon on the development of perception, for example. Moreover, he does not begin to discuss the "affective matrix" of child art until the penultimate page. I believe that the rewarding researches of British "object relations" theorists, like Ronald Winnicott, Marion Milner and Charles Rycroft, on symbolism, illusion and imagination, throw considerable light on this vital part of child art and its relation to specifically human biology.

Misconceiving the world

By Andrew Hislop

JOSEPH ROSENBLOOM :
Polar Bears Like It Hot
Illustrated by Joyce Behr
Oak Tree Press. £3.50.
0 8069 4612 1

If you see a man go grey overnight because his wife has been sucked to death by a vampire bat, or find a wolf asiatic because he has left his missus, or hear the neighbour's polar bear complaining about the heat, you're dreaming, or Hollywood (which is not a city in California) has got it wrong again, or our maker has decided that Joseph Rosenbloom, the author of a guide to popular misconceptions, shouldn't always get it right.

Mr Rosenbloom points out a number of wrong trees up which we're prone to barking. (And I hope no one is thinking that all the dogs amongst us bark—what about the basenji, silly—or that wolves don't bark, or that all dogs, for that matter, doesn't descend from wolves, or that we can't possibly find a lion up the tree.) His book is "intended for readers of all ages" but it will be of special value as an incentive to the young to read and learn more about the world they live in". However, the young would have had to have lived in the world for some time to have acquired some of the misconceptions the author has chosen. How many children run around, their heads replete with such misguided notions as that nerve impulses travel at the speed of light or that all bacteria do not reproduce sexually?

At least, if the weight of their ignorance is too strenuous, they know that it's not the sweat of their tuxedo brow that offends their nostrils but more of that bacteria going to work on their heads of perspiration. And, lest by this time, the young readers have gone right off these microscopically little perishers, Mr Rosenbloom tells us that not all of them are harmful—some turn indigestible milk into yoghurt which, when kept down in the stomach, is digested with the help of bacteria.

Further vital information for future years is provided by Mr Rosenbloom. No young male reader of this book is likely to get maniacally cutting or scrupulously eschew washing his hair to avoid going bald; or leave the rat race in the hope that he will live longer than his wife ("... in all societies around the world, whether industrialized or primitive, women live longer than men"); or will cuddle in the old peoples' home that women more than men.

There is much information, however, that can be used by children when they are still young. We bridle the parents who give this book to their offspring and then whine about it on the grounds that it is warmer. And, if they spot any children combing their others' bodies for lice and fleas accuse them of acting like "little monkeys" they will soon be proved right. Monkeys do not look for insects but they bite of salt from perspiration which they pop into their mouths, bacteria and all so doubtless.

Polar Bears Like It Hot is an American book and British readers of any age are presented with a number of misconceptions about things which, in all probability, they never had misconceptions about. They will probably have not heard of the Chicago fire, let alone think that it was started by Mrs O'Leary's cow and they would not be able to chew their way through the problem of whether a Baby Ruth candy bar, was named after the President's wife or President Grover Cleveland's eldest daughter, even if they had their teeth in one.

But this does not make the book less useful. Knowledge for many is not the dedicated eradication of ignorance, but an important ingredient in one-upmanship. Knowing that you know something that someone else has not heard of is satisfying, but polishing out to someone that they have got completely the wrong idea about it is more pleasing for us latent pedagogical dictators. The joy of a reader discovering that pneumonoultramicroscopicsilicovolcanoconiosis is the longest word in the dictionary is greater when the Mary Poppins-besotted boy next door thinks that it is "supercalifragilisticexpialidocious", which is a neologism.

But all of Mr Rosenbloom's entries have the complete certainty of gospel truth. (And if you are worried about the truth of the Bible when it talks of the voice of the turtle in Song of Songs, the turtle stands for turtledove). But there is would be a great misconception if the reader were to think that every word in a book like this was indisputably true.

The Two Sisters

Epaulettes Lucy of the locket
Sugared pocket after pocket
With the sweetness of her glance
Which promised all on equal chance.

But Emma had her portrait made
And openly such scorn displayed
Take from those shafts of pure contempt
Not one poor suitor felt exempt.

Yes, Lucy was the nicer girl,
Good for such a temporary whirl,
Yet strange how many men prefer
A supercilious hauteur.

John Mole

King for a day

By Sarah Hayes

CLIVE KING:
Ninny's Hunt
Kestrel. £4.95.
0 7226 5617 3

Clive King is a plain speaker. His story, though set in the fifth century and buzzing with historical and mythological references, is surprisingly direct and approachable. Unlike other tales of the Dark Ages, this one is quite free of doom-laden atmospherics. Flood, civil war, human sacrifice, giant squids and the storm d'Arthur are all taken as a matter of course and not weighed down with turgid description.

In language Mr King is outrageously anachronistic, but this is part of his method and part of the charm of his agreeable book. His stylistic approach which uses modern metaphors and tinkles rhymes and riddles helps to make the reader understand what it might have felt like to live in the fifth century—at the expense, perhaps, of historical authenticity. Though genuine information is subtly conveyed, this is as much adventure story as history.

The book's main strength derives from the nature of the hero and narrator. Ninny is a runty black-haired outcast, enslaved by the tall flaxen folk of the Angles and useful to them as dogsbody, butt and scapegoat. No one tells Ninny anything; he never knows what is going on; he is constantly making a fool of himself; and he is irresistible. Furthermore in good folk-lorish tradition, the fool not only survives his disasters but triumphs in the end. Ninny has a practical approach to life: how to keep warm and fed, stay out of the way, and have a bit of fun at the same time—these are his modest aims. But it does not happen quite like that.

Will Ninny be king for a day or a slave forever? asks the elder statesman of the Angles. There does not seem to be much of a choice to Ninny, and it is only after the Angle-folk have thrown all their possessions into the sacred pool to appease the god of the flood that he realizes that he, as temporary king, is also about to be ditched. In the nick of time he shins up a tree, only to spy a rival tribe hiding in the forest. He proceeds to conduct a parley from his useful vantage point and manages to provoke the fury of both sides.

Everything Ninny does wrong—and he does everything wrong—turns out mysteriously to be right in the end. After surviving the sacrifice, he is adopted as a sort of mascot by big Diffa, the king's son; and he finds himself a job, helping Smith and Wright to build a mighty boat to take a party of men and women to find a new home far from the floods that have covered Angle.

During a storm Ninny manages to steer the huge boat over the edge of the world as he thinks. In fact the Angles are at their destination—beached on a sandbar in the fenland coast of what the Angle-folk call the Isles of Ocean and the perspicacious reader will soon recognize to be Britain. The Angles have not arrived at a good moment: all is strife and confusion. Ninny is suspected of being a spy by all parties and is eventually swept up in the Northern march of the army of one Medraut who is to fight King Arturius his father. After the battle, destiny steers Ninny and the boat that carries the dying king to the island of the brothers.

For Arturius it is the last resting place, but for Ninny the island provides the answer to the riddle of his ridiculous name. The monks' records tell of the birth, not fifteen years ago, of Ninian, son of Hrr, the long-dead King of the now disinherited Lesser Picts. Now Ninny is like Diffa, a landless son of a dead king; and it is to Diffa and his settlement that Ninny returns to begin a new life of peaceful coexistence among the Celts, Picts, Saxons, Romano-Britons, and Angles who now inhabit Britannia.

Ninny does not pause to reflect before he speaks or acts, and he has learnt not to make judgments or look back. His narration is thus a catalogue of incidents in which the getting of a cow into a boat assumes the same importance as the death of a king. Just once the story fails (like Ninny) into confusion as its author contrives a meeting between representatives of all the warring elements in Britain. Otherwise a combination of pace and cheerful humour serves to disguise the general improbability of the tale.

This is not an elegant or literary book. It is full of technical flaws, inaccuracies, schoolboy jokes, and horrible coincidences. Yet this is a book to be read and re-read; to be read aloud and borrowed to bits from the library. For Clive King has the gift of the gabber, or, as he would doubtless put it in his sly Pictish talk, the gift of the gebh.

Future darkness

By Holly Eley

VIRGINIA HAMILTON:
Dustland
Julia MacRae Books. £4.95.
0 86203 080 3

After a cursory listing of characters, *Dustland* begins:

This was the second day that the unit had been out of its own time and into the future. Its first day had been uneventful; yet it had been a frightful day. Because, in its first attempt at mind jumping, the unit appeared to have travelled into a place of endless, gritty dust. It could distinguish no landmarks. It saw no growth, no animals, no humans. But it divined instantly what must be the scarcest commodity if such land were inhabited. It named the place Dustland.

and so unpromisingly continues, for two thirds of the book. The Dawlps, Worthmas, Slakers, Rellers, the Bambrun and Maels who live between nolight and greylight are less than menacing, often as grey as their habitat. The four children who make up the unit, Thomas, Lavi, Justice and Dorlen, and who in their encounter with "the future" sometimes lose "psychic chunks", are so scantily drawn as to evade the imagination. However assiduously we follow the clues and try to interpret allegories (even with recourse to *The New Testament*, Tolkien, or *Psychic News*), without a picture of the children, only available in *Dustland*'s precursor, *Justice and her Brothers*, or towards the end of *Dustland* itself, we risk bewilderment and boredom. This is a great pity for if the two books had been combined the Dustland episode would have been absorbed into an intriguing whole.

In the earlier book we gradually become aware of the extra-sensory powers of a family of three American, small-town, lower middle class children and their friend Dorlen. The unlikelihood of ESP, which is skilfully inserted into the main narrative, is acceptable to the sceptic and enhances rather than detracts from a delicate and adventurous story of sibling rivalry. It is easy to believe in the telepathic "identicals" (twins, Thomas and Levi), and Dorlen who has healing powers and whose slovenly, dominant mother, "the Sensitive", shows the heroine, "singleton" Justice how to come to terms with her extra dimension of perception. Parental attempts to understand their children's abnormal powers and adolescent quarrels, with the aid of common sense, folk adage and adult-education-class science, help keep the story on a knife edge of reality; at the same time we are prepared for the improbable.

Perhaps Miss Hamilton's original intention was one book. Perhaps her publishers may yet release *Justice and her Brothers* and *Dustland* under a single title. Such is the strength of her first book that if this should happen we would be in possession of a minor American classic. The bumptious children's ancestors are Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer. It is not just that they live in the same part of America, but they respond to life with the same verve and their camaraderie and pranks are reminiscent of some of the best of Twain's inventions. Desegregation and the Space Age are opportunities for new kinds of adventures.

It should be mentioned that Miss Hamilton is a black writer, writing about, and surely to a certain extent for, black children. She can hardly fail to have absorbed the works of black writers such as Toni Morison, yet at no point in *Justice and her Brothers* or *Dustland* does she allow racial issues to obtrude and her writing is the more powerful for this restraint. This is yet another reason to hope that the sole centre of *Dustland* may one day be encased in its appropriate shell.

Last things

By Jennifer Moody

JOHN BRANFIELD:
The Fox in Winter
Gollancz. £4.95.
0 575 02860 2

JOSEPHINE POLLE:
Hannah Chance
Hutchinson. £4.50.
0 09 141190 4

The majority of the patients of Nancy, Stemmack's District Nurse, are elderly. Nancy's daughter Fran is a slightly resentful teenager. Among Nancy's patients are Lettie and Tom Treloar. Tom is ninety years old, a former tin miner. Again John Branfield has drawn his inspiration from the scenery and people of Cornwall, and again they have not failed him. For he has portrayed, in a mature and sensitive manner, the blooming of an affectionate and respectful friendship between Fran and the ancient Tom. Starting as a reluctant duty, Fran begins to tap his rich store of memories, and in the end herself becomes absorbed in the fascination of what he has to say and the dignity of his personality.

Every character in this book is rounded and believable. Nancy is brisk, efficient, humorous, critical of all her colleagues and some of her patients, and deeply human. Desmond and Vera Rowe, Mr Treloar's geriatrism and his wife, fitfully dutiful, tire of waiting so long for the reward of inheritance. Above all stands Mr Treloar, proud, cunning, independent, clear-sighted, determined to stay alive until all his memories are recorded.

This is the unspoken adventure of the book: the race to bring forth into the mainstream of accessible history Mr Treloar's lifetime of personal experience. When this is done, his own eventual death seems a gentle rounding off of a life well lived.

The backdrop to the book is the illness and death of the old, but in an way does this create a sense of dread or depression. The author has proved triumphantly that the twentieth century's "great unpopulariable" can be spoken of in front of the children, and to their great advantage. Its trends with great integrity an unerring path between the twin temptations of sentimentality and horror. In his honest and matter-of-fact way, he reassures his readers that death is as natural a necessary and incidental a part of existence as eating and sleeping. This is a worthwhile addition to teenage literature.

Hannah Chance is a middle-aged and pleasantly astringent teacher at a school for extra-bright problem students and daughter of an otherworldly clergyman. She is drawn unwillingly into the search for fellow teacher Chris Cunningham. This is a classic murder mystery, complete with the now obligatory explanation of why the police cannot be called in. Chris, it turns out, has been murdered because he happened on a plot to cause an ecological disaster and that hold up the economic development of the area. The members of the plot are agents of "a foreign power with an interest in eroding the economy", which is vague enough to be politically unembarrassing and will lose the publishers no overseas sales.

The plot takes the reader through a fundamentalist religious sect, an isolated lighthouse and a remote country cottage, and has among its characters a remorseless, skilful cripple, a sexually repressed lighthousekeeper and one of the extra-bright pupils of Hannah's school, not to mention a murderously obedient and capable collie dog. The whole hotch (the worst thrown made by my labrador I have ever known has been in like me to death). The whole story moves along with great élan, and though there are occasional lapses into subsequently unexplained mysteries, on the whole the reader is both stimulated and intrigued. The dénouement is itself a bit rapid, and is marked by those flashes of intuition which make us ordinary mortals feel so incompetent, flashes in which Hannah chooses the level likely of a hundred possibilities and is of course always right. The deus ex machina is perhaps explicable by the fact that through her father she is closer to God than most.

All in all, a rattling good tale, written with pace and peopled by believable monsters. In the end I was a bit sad that the dreadful Marcia—affluent, intolerant, young church Marcia—was not part of the gang of misfits. She deserved to be!

Development

The House of God is due to be converted.
These days He has no need of so much space,
The children all grown up and moved away.
A family scattered, sad but commonplace.

Bawling or house-housey? No theatre
Or other devil's playground, heaven forfend!
A last stroll round the old backyard, and then
He leaves to room with some old Reverend.

D. J. Enright

Hero with a difference

By Alan Jenkins

HELEN YOUNG:
What Difference Does It Make, Danny?
Deutsch. £3.25.
0 233 97243 X

Danny Blane has everything going for him—he is a bright, well-adjusted, likeable child who shines at games (especially swimming), popular with teachers and classmates alike; and he has epilepsy. This is how he puts it: he is not "an epileptic", he "has epilepsy". A modern moral tale which makes a plea for the freeing of epilepsy from the prejudice and ignorance which surrounds it ("more myth and superstition" there than with any other condition, according to Danny's doctor). Helen Young's *What Difference Does It Make, Danny?* tells the story of a crucial episode in the boy's life as his parents, teachers and fellow schoolchildren are taught to come to terms with and accept the condition in a very matter of fact way.

"Anyone can have a fit; just think how often we say, 'I nearly had a fit'", remarks the enlightened headmistress. Danny's first fit at school is watched with interest by the children and with alarmed but capable solicitude by his teacher. "'You looked like a disco dancer who has gone over the top'", a friend comments. This attitude of offhandedness mingled with intelligent concern is shared by Danny, his parents, everyone, it seems, who matters. His convulsions and deathly stillness are managed competently, if nervously, by the sensible Miss Pringle: "'New we are finally seeing a fit . . and we are going to let Danny get on with it'".

The idyllic occasion of school sports day is marked by Danny's winning the swimming races and doing pretty well in the running ones too; his taking naturally and skilfully to the new equipment introduced by a young games master into gym lessons seems to promise great things in the way of enjoyment and acclaim. Sadly, the teacher who recognizes his talent is also the only unenlightened adult in sight. Finding out about Danny's epilepsy, the masterful Mr Masterson immediately bans him from all sport involving the slightest degree of risk—which for a spirited boy like Danny is the only kind worth doing. Worst of all, the ban is extended to swimming. Overnight, Mr Masterson becomes Mr Nastyson (though he is not really as nasty as all that; he can see Danny appears to be fine, but worries about his reaction in a competitive crisis).

Danny's reaction to this crisis is sadly predictable: hurt and confused, he retaliates with insolence and rage towards the teachers he now sees as his betrayers, and with surliness, "moods" and irritability towards schoolmates and parents losing popularity, sympathy and support in the process. Shunned by all, he becomes miserable and withdrawn, and is thrown back on defences of the "if I'm going to be punished I'll do something to be punished for" kind. Unable to turn to his infinitely well-meaning parents for fear of destroying their confidence in his normality, he takes to nonghlinces, stealing a swimming cup (which he considers is rightfully his) from the head's office and, finally, playing truant. Throughout all this Danny never actually seems to grow less lovable; we know it's just a Cry for Help.

It is not long before Danny hears a real cry for help, when a toddler teddies off the canal-bank and into the canal. Danny to the rescue: scenes of joy and relief, congratulation, forgiveness, reconciliation; exit Danny the Difficult, enter Danny the Hero. Mr Masterson is unmanned (besutifully, he has broken a leg sprinting along by a swimming-pool—something he tells the children never to do) but man enough to admit the error of his ways. Danny has given him just about the best crisis-reaction scenario he could have, and from now on no one is going to stand in Danny's way by throwing the word "epileptic" at him. He always has been able to cope with epilepsy; the grown-ups are the ones who need help.

It is all just about believable; though the characters are like the cardboard people on the back of cornflakes packets, and everyone seems a bit too nice to be true, the school scenes have an authentic (if a shade too sophisticated) air. Helen Young writes crisply, but she cannot prevent an occasional schoolmistressy note creeping in. However, she never talks down to her readers, and this book, generously illustrated with appealingly sketchy drawings by Quentin Blake, will strike a chord in most children who have felt the sting of injustice—which means all children; and a deep chord, in any who have felt that they were being singled out for unwelcome attention. For children who have epilepsy and their parents, it should be an instructive, heartwarming read.

Tunnels and trains

By Judith Elkin

LAWRENCE LEONARD:
The Horn of Mortal Danger
Julia MacRae Books. £4.95
0 86203 010 2

HARRIET GRAHAM:
The Ring of Zuraya
Hamish Hamilton. £4.95.
0 241 10475 0

The Horn of Mortal Danger is Lawrence Leonard's first book. He begins rather slowly but once under way, this is a lively, original and exciting adventure story set against an entirely credible yet fantastic background.

The two main characters, Jen and her brother Widgie find a strange passage below a disused railway and discover that beneath the streets of London there is a fascinating secret world of small-scale canals and railways inhabited by rather old-fashioned, child-sized men. But this is not a whimsical world: it is a savage world of working men struggling to survive in a harsh environment. The clothes, names and language may be quaint but these are hard, fighting men.

Jen and Widgie immediately find themselves involved in a deadly struggle for territory between the two rival groups, the Railwaymen and the Canallers. The early skirmishes the great Battle for Beasley's Arches and, subsequently, the joint initiative against the man-eating rats, are vividly and realistically described. The children's escape through the confusing network of canals and railways, closely pursued by the underground, makes interesting reading. The suspense and pace of the story is well maintained throughout and the children's eventual arrival above ground provides a humorous climax.

The imaginative detail with which the underground world is described and the very individual portraits of many of the characters result in a fascinatingly credible story. But I felt that it was a pity that some of the impetus was lost at the end by the author's use of an epilogue to finish off the loose ends and provide more detail of life underground. If such information could not be incorporated in the main story, it would appear to be rather superfluous and unnecessary for the reader's understanding and enjoyment.

The Ring of Zuraya provides an equally fantastic story but this time within the context of a historical novel. It is set in the year 1894 at the time of the death of Emperor Alexander III, Tsar of all the Russias. William, Flora and their guardian, Samuel are on their way from London to St Petersburg, where Flora is to train with a great Russian ballet master. Travelling on the Orient Express, their peace is disturbed by the rather ungracious arrival of Crown Prince Michael of Slovedia. This somewhat contrived event leads to their involvement in Crown Prince Michael's affairs and a plot to overthrow the King of Slovedia, under cover of the confusion of the Tsar's funeral.

There follows a thrilling sequence of deceits, kidnaps, disappearances, and amazing coincidences, helped considerably by the fact that Samuel is a skilful conjurer and ventriloquist. An early morning chase through the Russian countryside in a carriage and pair, pursued by sho baddies, culminates in the final climax when William saves the King from the assassination attempt. The story is written in a lively, chatty style, narrated by the boy and capturing his tension and confusions in the face of treachery. The pace is fast-moving and will appeal to children who like a cloak-and-dagger approach to historical adventure stories.

Believe it or not

By Oliver Liss

Funny Facts About the Tiger
0 237 45523 4

Funny Facts About the Giraffe
0 237 45540 4

Funny Facts About the Crocodile
0 237 45541 2

Funny Facts About the Wolf
0 237 45524 2
Evans. £2.95 each.

The funny fact about the series of Funny Facts books is that it is the pictures rather than the facts which are funny. The facts are few in number, a mere ten per book, epitomistic in their succinctness, random examples of, rather than poignant episodes in, the lives of these beasts of the field and river: "The wolf, when fully grown spends almost the whole year alone"; "The giraffe very rarely lies down to rest, but stays standing up until it is time to sleep"; "The crocodile moves slowly on land, although it can travel at great speed in the water"; "The tiger lives in Asia, mainly in India".

The pictures, delightfully executed by Nolla Bosnin, sure of line, subtle in colouring, use these bare facts as an excuse to take these wild animals out of their natural habitat and place them in a world of make believe in which they indulge in very human practices. Thus, the wolf spending his year alone sits in an armchair (admittedly on top of a mountain) reading a book beneath an umbrella; the giraffe, who very rarely lies down to rest, stands looking out of the window of the Orient Express, while the sleeping-car attendant serves; the crocodile is shown travelling at great speed in the water on water skis and the tiger who lives mainly in India is reclining on cushions, a turban on his head, his glazed green eyes concentrating on the mouthpiece of the hookah which he draws on with tigerish attention.

Children will, visibly, be greatly entertained by these books, though they might get some funny ideas about the animals from the pictures. The facts, alas, might just go in one eye and out the other.

Literally speaking

The one way to revive a metaphor once it has died is to take it literally, which is what Shirley Hughes has done to some fifty or more examinate English sayings in *Over the Moon* (Faber. £3.25. 0 571 11594 2). She has picked her clichés shrewdly, and made them into amusing pictures. It is comical to watch language being brought down to earth: to see someone actually casting pearls before swine, or keeping their nose to the grindstone, or being born with a silver spoon in their mouth. The style of the drawings is early-Punch, strongly naturalistic everywhere except for the human faces, which are furiously expressive. On Shirley Hughes's first page it rains worryingly lifelike cats and dogs on to two cowering pedestrians; overleaf a revoltingly meek young man is visibly tied to his shrewish mother's apron-strings. There is an edge of unpleasantness to these two drawings that will please any child, and which too many of the remaining pages lack. But this is a simple and engaging book that might prompt its readers to have fun of their own visualizing the merely verbal.

J.S.

Round and round

I have an ancient bike,
So life is never dull.
Its handlebars are cowhorns:
Its saddle like a skull.

Its handlebars are cowhorns:
My steering leads to muddles.
I wish I had a Raleigh
To get me through the puddles.

I wish I had a Raleigh
Or one of the proper makes,
Not this old rusty spinner
With antediluvian brakes.

Not this old rusty spinner
Which always makes me late:
I rise upon each pedal
With one leg very straight.

I rise upon each pedal
And press the other down.
That's how the wheels go round
And round and round and round.

John Fuller

Beginning books

By Gillian Cross

DIANA WYNNE JONES:
The Four Grannies
Hamish Hamilton £2.25.
0 241 10445 9

NAOMI MITCHISON:
The Vegetable War
Hamish Hamilton £3.25.
0 241 10444 0

ALEXANDER McCALL SMITH:
The White Hippo
Hamish Hamilton £2.25.
0 241 10460 2

A full length book can be a forbidding sight to a child who has just learnt to read. It is not surprising, therefore, that publishers produce books, like those in the Hamish Hamilton Antelope series, which are attractively bound, full of black and white pictures and short enough not to deter new readers. But such books are not easy to write and these three recent additions to the Antelope list illustrate some of the problems.

Diana Wynne Jones, in *The Four Grannies*, starts with a promising situation. Because of their parents' previous marriages, Emily and Erg have four grandmothers: one stern, one anxious, one selfish and one feebly saintly. When the parents go away, all four grannies come to look after the children. The prospect is uncomfortable and the things get worse when Erg's invention, made from stray bits of household equipment, develops magic powers, apparently turning Emily into a large teddy bear. Erg's efforts to keep this a secret from the grannies are entertaining and result in the production of one magically amalgamated Supergranny who combines the annoying characteristics of all four.

Much of the action is lively, reinforced by some splendid doublings from Thelma Lambert. But the final effect is somewhat wooden. Diana Wynne Jones is one of the most inventive and original of modern writers for children, but her abilities seem cramped here. The grannies fall between two stools, being neither believable characters nor satisfyingly monstrous monsters, and the plot is solved unsatisfactorily and abruptly by an accident. It is a fairly entertaining book, but it falls short of that comic glee at which it is clearly aims.

The aim of *The Vegetable War* is far less easy to see. The story, set in modern Zambia, follows the difficulties of a group of boys who sell their fathers' vegetables illegally in the streets of Lusaka instead of taking them to the government depot. The boys clash with the police and there is a splendid slapstick scene of vegetable-throwing before one of the boys acquires a licence which will enable them all to trade in peace. But the plot is scrappy and tangled, with crucial strands that cannot be properly developed in so short a compass. Passing reflections on the role of the police and the nature of Zambian humanism are tantalizing to an adult and would mean little to a child. Few of the boys, except Zingazi, the hero, have any individuality. Indeed, it is impossible to tell whether Kumuna, Kapepa and Kapuso are three different boys or merely one who is exceptionally subject to primer's errors. In any case, to an inexperienced reader, the cluster of similar names provides a further confusion in an already confused book.

The White Hippo has no such confusions. It is a simple tale of an albino hippo who is protected by villagers in The Gambia. They attempt to mislead a white man who has come ostensibly to photograph the hippo, guessing that he actually wishes to shoot it. But they fail. The hippo dies and is commemorated in a song. It could well be a moving song. But by expansion into a book of this length something in the story. The narration is pedestrian with occasional inept attempts at fine writing. (Why, for instance, does the author describe the stars as "slipping and swinging like the lamps of an intimidatingly festival"? Do the stars move faster in Africa?) Although the story ends with a death, it does not build to any kind of climax. Moreover, the author does not explain why the white man should wish to shoot the hippo.

Undoubtedly there is a need for books of this length and type. But a pretty cover and thirty-four illustrations do not automatically make a book worth reading. Nor do they compensate for a wooden, confused or pedestrian story. A book of ten thousand words or so can be as well worth reading as a short story or a novel. But it must be written with the same skill and thoughtfulness, not tossed off carelessly to exploit a promising market.

Growing up

By Anne Carter

GRISELDA GIFFORD:
Silver's Day
Gollancz. £4.25.
0 575 02861 0

ELEANOR ESTES:
The Lost Umbrella of Kim Chu
Illustrated by Jacqueline Ayer
Oxford. £3.50.
0 19 271443 0

There are plenty of stories dealing with the likenesses of twins, not nearly so many where the emphasis is on what to the twins themselves is often more important, their differences. Cass and Carrie may look alike but they are two very distinct people, eager to be themselves and finding, with a touch of sadness, that their early closeness can yield to new interests and new friends. Nor does their author give them anything like equal weight in the book. Cass, the heroine of *Silver's Day* as she was of the earlier *Cass the Brave*, is untidy, impetuous and devoted to her rubby old pony, Silver. Carrie is neat, careful and prefers babies to horses. When Carrie makes friends with rich Mary Clegg, possessor of a thoroughbred pony and a swimming pool, Cass feels mortified and left out. Her own friendship with Flora Honeybun, who looks odd, smells of garlic and turns out to suffer mildly from epilepsy, starts in a dutiful spirit, though it proves a milestone on the road to self-knowledge.

Silver's Day is a straightforward tale of no great drama but it is entertainingly written and the simple realism of its setting is backed by considerable insight. Griselda Gifford has taken the conventional country vicarage family and remade it in the image of the present day. The domestic interior that emerges, with the young stepmother, new baby brother and Jamaican lodger and general lounge-in, is convincing and the relationships and adjustments within it are important in the story as the somewhat more exotic problems of the Honeybuns.

To an English reader, the whole setting of Eleanor Estes's novel *The Lost Umbrella of Kim Chu* is strange. Kim Chu lives in a tiny tenement in New York City's Chinatown, right underneath the elevated railway, and the umbrella, strictly speaking, belongs not to her but to her father. It is a special presentation umbrella with a secret scroll inside the handle, so that when Kim loses it, on a visit to the library, Grandmother is quite justified in sending her out again, not to come back until she has found it. The quest takes her by way of the "El" to the Staten Island ferry before, with the help of her friend Mae Lee, her instinct and an improbable degree of luck, Kim traces the umbrella and all ends happily. The narrative style is elementary even for nine-year-olds and the adult characters sketchily drawn but the book gives a refreshing glimpse into a lifestyle so unfamiliar that it might belong to another century. Earnest, but loving little Kim, with her vivid imagination and worldly innocence, is an endearing person and her excitable, secret-sharing friendship with Mae Lee is both universal and authentic.

Stories east and west

By Brian Baumfield

MARGARET MAYO:
Saints, Birds and Beasts
Illustrated by Cara Lockhart Smith
Kaye and Ward. £4.95.
0 7182 1236 3

MARCUS CROUCH:
The Ivory City
and other stories from India and Pakistan
Illustrated by William Stobbs
Michael Joseph. £4.95.
0 7207 1188 6

Story tellers have been with us since the beginning of time—or so it would seem, and like the sun they rise in the East. Today their importance is also seen in the West, with children's librarians telling stories of all kinds to young people from all nationalities and ages. Not much tribute has been paid to their skill, except by the children themselves and, while they are not the conceivers of tales, they deliver the end product in a way which brings untold pleasure to very many thousands throughout each year that passes.

These two books, each in its different way, exemplify this tradition. The first, *Saints, Birds and Beasts*, consists of a collection of legends, apparently by different hands, concerning saints and their special relationships with animals and birds. Margaret Mayo appears as author of some, and has assembled the whole. Facts about the lives of some saints are occasionally difficult to discover, and when found can be dull reading for a child. On the other hand, there are numerous legends of the more brightly shining figures which have more of the substance of fairy tales.

The telling of the legends is variable—usually the prose is straightforward, occasionally patronizing. However, the stories are short, commending themselves to the child of junior school age. There is also a useful appendage of the feast days of the saints, and a factual summary of the saint's life, prefacing the legend which follows. The black-and-white illustrations are not unattractive. Useful background material therefore for class assemblies—but also a book which many younger children could read and enjoy for themselves.

The second book *The Ivory City* is ideal for the adult storyteller. Marcus Crouch has brought together a fascinating collection of stories from India and Pakistan and has retold them in a lively and entertaining way. The magic, mystery, poverty and splendour of the East is evoked time and time again—even though the essence of the stories is that of our own familiar fairy tales. There is a mixture of fantasy, of goodness triumphing over evil, of horror—exposed but briskly dispatched, and of commonsense and shrewdness overcoming stupidity and human frailty. Common to many of the stories is the idea that beauty of person and kindness of spirit go together. In the tale of the bald wife, in which two spouses of a merchant are almost bald, it is the one who demonstrates kindness and affection that by magical powers is turned into a young and beautiful woman—while the other who harbours jealousy and evil has a less attractive end. If beauty occurs frequently in these folk tales so do ghosts. In the story of the lakir who wanted to be perfect, two young men are confronted by six ghostly skulls which offer desperate counsel. Four friends seeking to learn the secret of life, witness hair-raising visions but they are all given good advice and follow it so smartly that the future cannot but be idyllic, and horror is shortlived.

Indian words and terms are employed which require explanation if the stories are to be appreciated fully, and to this end the author has also included a chapter for parents in which he explains the background to the folk tales and makes some interesting comparisons with those of the West. He has also included a glossary. He draws, for example, attention to the way in which the Brahmon (who features in many stories, and is top of the caste tree) "is portrayed as foolish or ineffectual, but nearly always with some affection and tolerance".

The illustrations by William Stobbs are delicate line drawings evocative of the situation described—it would have been nice, though, to have had at least a few of them in colour. This is a particularly welcome title when so many schools in our large towns have a large number of pupils from India and Pakistan. There are not many books which can bring back their own culture to them so vividly.

Strange encounters

By Sylvia Clayton

WINIFRED FINLAY:
Tales of Sorcery and Witchcraft
Illustrated by Laszlo Acs
Kaye and Ward. £4.50.
0 7182 1249 5

ELISABETH MACE:
The Freedom Cage
André Deutsch. £4.50.
0 233 97260 9

Witches generate drama. There is no hesitation about their actions; in a flash they can turn an enemy into a toad or a snake or change themselves into the intimidating shape of a cat, a dog or a bear. They need not walk through a door, they can materialize; they can speed through the air at night on a beanstalk or a broomstick and conjure up a gale or a tempest at will. Their instant supernatural powers make an immediate appeal to children in the context of legend or fairytale, but difficulties can arise when the stories related have a background of historical fact. Children's curiosity is usually direct and precise, and the best books respect their wish to know exactly what happened, in so far as this is possible in areas made hazy by time and superstition.

Winifred Finlay has taken ten of the best-known episodes in the history of witchcraft in Britain, among them the story of Elisabeth Froocis and her cat Sathan (white in this version but more usually spotted); the witches of Pendle, Isabel Gowdie, John Darrell the fraudulent exorcist, and retold them in tidy, strait-laced prose. But the very method of retelling—Isabel Gowdie's confession about the wild, murdering activities of her coven in Nairn, north-east Scotland, is put into the third person "Isabel and the other witches decided to destroy all the Laird's male children"—gives the stories a tone of accepted fact which the odd paragraph of reservation does not destroy. On three occasions in a short book witchcraft is linked with epilepsy, and while sorcery was probably blamed for the effects of this nervous disease, it seems unhelpful to underline the connection, especially in a book intended for children. Most of the stories can be found told with more zest in Christina Hole's *Witchcraft in England*, which is so vividly written that it is easily accessible to older children and is enriched by Mervyn Peake's mysterious drawings. Laszlo Acs's illustrations to Winifred Finlay's book look pleasing but cast no shadow of menace.

Elisabeth Mace's short novel, *The Freedom Cage*, begins with sudden supernatural happenings. Visitors to a stately home disappear from the earth in an unexplained fire and join families who vanished from the same place in freak blizzards in the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. The rest of the book does not unfortunately match this bold imaginative stroke. When a large cast of characters from different periods has been assembled in the strange mountain village of Mayllehi Magna, the story drifts into a tepid series of encounters, lacking in tension because few risks are involved. The most recent arrivals are cordially received by the local inhabitants, who apparently owe their existence to unseen but all-powerful Soul Guardians. The village's main activity is the performance of a kind of pageant in the Guardians' honour. In return for unquestioning obedience the villagers are supplied with heat, light, food and all necessities of life. Two of the newcomers, Austen and Minna Kalinsky, teenage Americans, brother and sister, feel in their different ways uneasy in the atmosphere of total conformity and attempt to escape in the company of Kit, a descendant of seventeenth-century strolling players. Minna and Austen are sharply drawn but the mountain scenes have a cotton-wool vagueness, and the book is not charged with sufficient energy to work as a parable of liberty.

Faerie folk

By Ann Evans

WENDY WOOD:
The Silver Chanter.
Traditional Scottish Tales and Legends
Chatto and Windus. £3.95.
0 7011 2448 2

KATHLEEN KILLIP:
Twisting the Rope
and Other Folktales from the Isle of Man
Hodder and Stoughton. £4.25.
0 340 24832 7

To those readers—and there must be many—who use these columns as a short cut to choosing the best available literature for children in their care, it need only be said: here are two collections of folk tales, one from Scotland, the other from the Isle of Man. If you have money to spare, buy the first; if you have none, beg, borrow or steal the second, for in it you will find both poetry and truth.

Kathleen Killip, author of *Twisting the Rope, and Other Folktales from the Isle of Man*, was born and brought up in a Manx farming community, which perhaps explains the total authenticity of these stories. One never stops to question it; one accepts their truth as one accepts the rising of the sun, and it is the truth not only of hard fact but of imagination rooted deep in the very soul of an island people. The triumph of this book is that its author can give such perfect voice to what indeed was originally meant to be listened to rather than read. Her words have a melody and a lilting rhythm of their own which makes the book as much a musical experience as a literary one.

Boldly she exploits the poetry and the rich earthiness of the Manx language; suggarts and lugganes and cabbyl ushteys, litters on the shore and cattle in the haggart, they tumble over each other in exuberant succession, and always behind them is the island backcloth, unobtrusively but regularly restating itself, like the refrain of a ballad: the glen gold with gorse, the north wind on the mountain, the sun on the seagull's wing, the flash of a fuchsia hedge. So powerfully does she recreate her world that within a few pages one is caught up in it, to the extent of accepting, without surprise let alone credulity, even the supernatural elements in it. For though these stories grow naturally out of field and farmyard and chimney corner, yet always there is the feeling of magic in the air. Threading their way in and out of them are the evil spirits, the wise women and above all the Little People, whose power is absolute and who add an extra dimension to nearly all the stories.

In the wake of this enriching book, Wendy Wood's *The Silver Chanter: Traditional Scottish Tales and Legends* appears pale and prosaic. The stories are mostly village tales, about farmers, woodcutters and pedlars, giants, wizards and faerie folk, but they lack shape and the language is colourless, even banal. Occasional Scottish phrases ("ye did no see body") rub shoulders with everyday English ones ("I think we should raid the larder"), with incongruous results. There is little feeling of the past, still less of the supernatural. As a collection this is readable enough, but it does not begin to compare with its classic Oxford University Press counterpart, by Barbara Kor Wilson, still head of the field after twenty-six years.

Attracting the reader

By Joy Chant

Children have such a wide choice of picture books and so short a time to enjoy them, that the problem is to select those that are too good to miss. The standard has been so high for so long, that no child need spend time on the mediocre, and new titles must have some solid merit if they are to compete with those already available. Newness alone is no recommendation to children, to whom everything is new. The books in this batch, for children old enough to want a story but not of an age to have outgrown the picture book format, have all been produced with care and skill; but most of them lack the vigour and brightness necessary to attract and satisfy the young reader. The most complete failure is *The Prince and the Lute*; good design, colourful pictures, but the story falls flat. It strives to make a moral point, but this is somewhat obscure; the peacelovingprince saves only himself from war, not his people. The lute of the title appears, awkwardly, at the last minute, to bring people the happiness that safety and prosperity have not. Even the priggish hero does not find the idea convincing.

Several of these books have the disadvantage of being imports, with that faint strangeness which seems to deter children more than the exotic. *The Useless Donkeys* has a general flavour of smiling vapidity, unexpected in an Australian book. *Snow-Cat* has a stronger ambience, for example North American animals and vocabulary, and the added problem of illustrations which though lovely are in muted shades of brown and blue; but it has a charm that may outweigh these drawbacks. The writing has an easy swing, and the book is lifted by the personality of Henry the ski-ing Siamese, affectionate, self-absorbed, and utterly feline. Arnold Lobel's *Fables*, in itself excellent, is likely to be best enjoyed by any adult who laughs at the jokes in *The New Yorker*; but the humour is too down-beat for children. The morals whether straightforward or tongue-in-cheek, will puzzle rather than edify or entertain. And what is a spit-ball?

The Lonely Skyscraper is surrounded by roads and is nobody's home, so he uproots himself and finds a new site in a forest, where he becomes home to hordes of small animals and thus is warm and happy. A good traditional theme, but perhaps skyscrapers are too hard to love; certainly I found the whole idea rather too strained. The illustrations are cheerful and unimpressive, with one serious fault; the scale of the skyscraper alters when convenient, so that the building which dwarfed people to invisibility can later be intimidated by a farmer and converse with a bird. Also the first opening is poorly designed; the first picture is on the right-hand page, the story begins on the left, and I missed the text every time.

Two very English books turn their eyes to the past. *Chestnut Farm 1860* is the solo production of an illustrator, and reads like it. The pictures are warm and solid, but the text, disorganized and dull, does not adequately support them. *Cathy's Story* is also a one-woman show, but a greater if incomplete success. It is a praiseworthy attempt to deal with the subject of death. Friendship with an old lady brings Cathy into contact with a harsher experience of life. Mrs Singer recounts tales of her own past describing a world where measles could be fatal and little girls attended their young brothers' funerals, yet happiness was still possible. The long-dead people in Mrs Singer's collection of photographs live for her, and at the end of the story Cathy is able to accept her friend's death. Unfortunately the pictures are unlikely to attract young children, and the text is too brief for its task; this might have been better done as an ordinary book.

Not What You Think contains two stories, the story of Oliver who is afraid of the old grandfather, and the story told him by his mother, of Oliver the baby elephant. This second Oliver resolutely accepts all he hears about "the ancient elephant" who hates children; until experience teaches him that you do not have to believe all you hear in the playground. It is delightfully done, with fine balance between pictures and text, and the little bouncing elephants are irresistible. I could have done without the other story, told in bullet-like beginning and end, which makes the lesson more explicit, but it is not a serious drawback. This is one it would be a pity to miss.

The best last: *Willie's Dreaming*. Charles Keeping is the artist of the inner city, teaching us to see its shapes and patterns, the beauty that lies beside its squalor. Fittingly the city in winter; he evokes as no-one else can the dazzle of bright shop-fronts reflected in wet streets, the glow of curtain-coloured windows, the gleam of rain on the grey cobbles. Most of all he sends us back in childhood that drabness could be changed with endless possibilities of magic and adventure. The subject this time is Edinburgh, and Willie, a boy with a dream of horse, immanent in Keeping's vision of the city; on the first page the streets are rankled, heavy straight lines and dull colours, but above them rise the fiery golden haze of the Castle, and opposite, Willie sits outside the solid grey tenement, drawn (the impression is almost of a scribble) with a soft liquid line, looking little more than a sketch against the weight of his background, but rippling with life. These are Keeping's three visual themes; the strong heavy lines, the fluid lines of the live creatures, the lambent colour. Willie's imaginary heroes are firemen of the horse-drawn engines; in real-life hero Mick the milkman. When Willie goes on his quest to Mick, braving the dangers of the streets, guided past locked gates by a beautiful maiden, he comes at last to a stable ruled by a giant and a place where life and dreams are fulfilled. Heavy lines dissolve into life, the pages are suffused with fiery colour, and out of the drabness of the city Willie's dream flowers in scarlet and gold. Splendid, cathartic, enriching; or in other words, Charles Keeping.

KURT BAUMANN: *The Prince and the Lute*. Illustrated by Jan Civerie. Victor Gollancz. £4.95. 0 575 02830 4

LYDIA PENNY: *The Useless Donkeys*. Illustrated by Judith Cook-Mellman. £4.95. 0 416 66861

MARY ARTHUR: *Snow-Cat*. Illustrated by Erick Ingraham. Victor Gollancz. £4.50. 0 575 03013

ARNOLD LOBEL: *Fables*. Jonathan Cape. £4.95. 0 224 01863 1

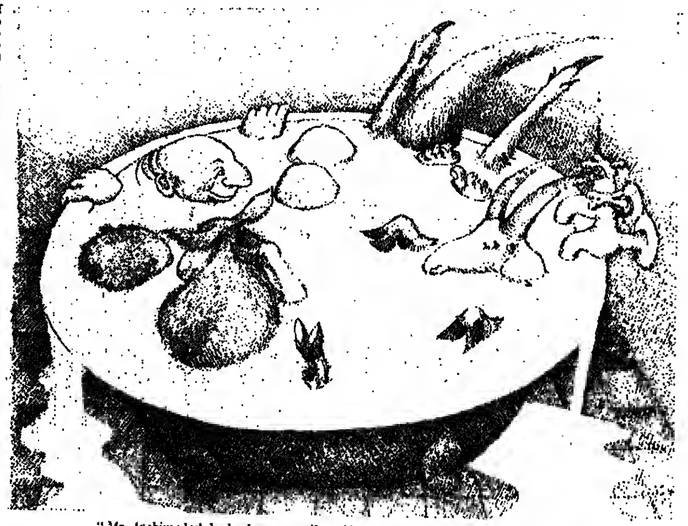
JERRY HAWKSWORTH: *The Lonely Skyscraper*. Illustrated by Emanuel Schongut. Methuen. £4.95. 0 416 80180 2

GINETTE PATTERSON: *Chestnut Farm 1860*. André Deutsch. £4.50. 0 233 97408 0

CATHERINE BOUGHTON: *Cathy's Story*. Evans. £4.50. 0 237 45619 1

MIRA LOBE: *Not What You Think*. Illustrated by Susi Weigel. Oxford. £4.95. 0 340 06609 3

CHARLES KEEPING: *Willie's Few Dreams*. Oxford University Press. £4.95. 0 19 279728 X



"Mr Archimedes' bath always overflowed"—from the book reviewed opposite.

Pre-school pictures

By Ruth Hawthorn

Parents are often teased (usually by people without children) for buying the books they like, rather than consulting their child. The implication is that children would much prefer more lowbrow stuff. There is some sort of justice in the charge, though I would want to argue the child's point of view slightly differently. But a wise child will try to please the parent. How can we read aloud a book that bores or repels us without conveying the fact? There is no point in being apologetic about it. A story that is irritating to read the first time round is liable to lead to childbattering on the thirtieth. Furthermore, I know that I am not the only parent who has actually fallen asleep while reading aloud. Having a story together is a particularly delightful way of sharing jokes, ideas, perceptions with a small child: they like it much better if your teeth are not gritted or your lids are not drooping.

The only way we can judge children's books is in terms of whether or not we would like to share it with particular children. With that in mind, we could pass the complaint on to the publishers: that they are the ones who often select books on the basis of artwork which gives them some kind of aesthetic or sentimental thrill which they therefore assume will please the under-fives. The import of Japanese picture books is a hazardous business in this respect. The two in this collection, *Knio* and *The Dog I Got Better* have strange, empty, mistily coloured pages, and some of the pictures, particularly in the second, are exquisite. Peggy Blakeley is masterly at writing simple, vibrant words for this age, and the two should go together well. But the result is emptiness compounded.

Possibly much older children would have seen the pictures as the publishers intended: the idea of the appropriate age is an elusive one. A book that leaves a three-year-old nonplussed may intrigue her when she is ten. The book that my eight-year-old liked best in this group was John Burningham's *Out and Be Eaten*, a picture book without words almost certainly intended for pre-school children. On each opening there is a picture of the ferocious head of one animal about to bite the tail of another kind of animal. Turn over, and the head to which that tail belongs is about to sink its teeth into another kind of tail. Then look again at the cover: the tail on the back endpapers goes right round to the front cover and the savage circle is completed. I wouldn't have chosen this for a little child, not because of the savagery but because I found the pictures rather harsh. But my older child (ominously) loved the idea. He has also recently grown into another of these books: a few years ago I tried to interest him in *Animal Lore and Disorder*, a book that I had loved as a child. He was upset by it. He only wanted to see *correct* animals, and would flip frantically through the split pages to match lion imp with lion legs. Now, however, the latest book of this kind by James Riddell *Up and Down on the Farm*, leaves him helpless with laughter. For those who do not yet know these books, I should explain that each pair of pages is devoted to an animal. On one of the pages is a sentence about the beast, on the other a picture, and its name written vertically beside it. But the book is cut in two horizontally, so when you flip it open the tops and bottoms get jumbled. "His loveable little pin-cushion goes 'snuffle, snuffle, snuffle', and if it doesn't take to you it can give you a horrid bite on the behind", a clear account of a Badgent. If it does not sound very amusing to you out of context, you should try to imagine a group of children reading it not through hysterical giggles.

A pair of artists with a wonderfully fresh touch, whose pictures one would be happy to share with any child is Jose Aruego and Ariane Dewey. Their collaboration on *Marie Louise's Heyday* has produced some lovely creatures, in theory possums and mongeese, with very appealing expressions and gestures. Marie Louise is in despair when asked to babysit for five small possums ("And on my Heyday"). They turn out to be terrible but she fixes them. "'I'm glad I'm *one* and not you', said Marie Louise to mama possum, and she left", a sentiment shared by many baby-sitters of other species, but gently put by this patient mongoose.

The Grannies Three by Mary Tozer is a good idea: she has a fine perception of the different kinds of grannies, an area of experience which most under fives are well acquainted with, but which has been little exploited by authors. The pictures are rich, bright and Tarrant-like, elaborated with borders woven from the subject. The grannies have a brush with a dragon and four bears, but it goes on just a little too long, and did not have quite enough originality to hold our attention. Pamela Allen's *Mr Archimedes' Bath* has Mr Archimedes as a present day grandpa trying to figure out why the level of his bath water rises and falls when he and his three curious friends get in and out. We enjoyed the pictures: Mr A is an elderly version of John Burningham's Mr Grumpy: pink and wrinkly, he is mostly seen in the nude getting in and out of his tub with a wombat, a kangaroo and a goat. We also enjoyed the idea, but I am told that if you did not already know the Principle, the way in which it is approached here might mislead you (Mr Archimedes asks *which* friend is responsible for the mess, and it turns out to be him). A good example of the way in which reactions to children's books will never be predictable.

Finally two books from North America, in both of which the artwork is more likely to appeal to adult than child. *The Fire Stealer*, an Indian legend from northern Ontario, has marvellous collage illustrations by Elizabeth Cleaver. It would read aloud well, but to older children, and it would be an excellent addition, for example, in a school library. *Ox-Cart Man* which won the Caldecott medal, annoyed me. It describes a year in the life of a New Englander and his family. The pictures are in the style of American Primitive paintings, and the text is a simple statement of the things that the family made and sold in the market. Again, this should be delightful; Laura Ingalls Wilder can charm us with details like this of pioneer survival. But this book has the details without any of her spirit. There is fine opportunity in be witty or wry or in any other way human in books like this; we have always enjoyed *Grandfather Bear* by Eva Scherbarth for all these qualities. But this book just takes the whole thing too seriously. One can't help feeling that the medal was awarded by one lot of solemn adults to another as a celebration of some empty myth.

PEGGY BLAKELEY: *Rain*. Paintings by Kota Tsuiuchi. Adam and Charles Black. £3.50. 0 7136 2017 X.

PEGGY BLAKELEY: *The Dog I Got Better*. Paintings by Chiera Tweskel. Adam and Charles Black. £3.50. 0 7136 2018 8.

IRLA MARI: *Eat and Be Eaten*. J. M. Dent and Sons. £3.50. 0 460 06054 6.

JAMES RIDDELL: *Up and Down on the Farm*. Atrium Press Ltd with Jonathan Cape. £2.95. 0 224017093 8.

NATALIE SAVAGE CARLSON: *Marie Louise's Heyday*. Pictures by Jose Aruego and Ariane Dewey. Julia MacRae Books. £3.75. 0 86203 065 X.

MARY TOZER: *The Grannies Three*. World's Work. £3.50. 437 79421 0.

PAMELA ALLEN: *Mr Archimedes' Bath*. Bodley Head. £3.50. 0 370 30258 3.

WILLIAM TOYE: *The Fire Stealer*. Pictures by Elizabeth Cleaver. Oxford University Press. £2.95. 19 5403215.

DONALD HALL: *Ox-Cart Man*. Pictures by Barbara Cooney. Julia MacRae Books. £3.95. 0 86203 076 5.

In among the hedgerows

By Celina Fox

JILL BARKLEM:

Brambly Hedge:

Summer Story 0 00 183923 3
Spring Story 0 00 183922 5
Winter Story 0 00 183711 7
Autumn Story 0 00 183739 7

Collins. £2.50 each.

The Brambly Hedge books are a tastefully produced series which recall the Little Grey Rabbit titles but as if they had been reissued for the 1980s by Tricia Guild. The stories centre on a collection of mice and the pleasant world they inhabit "on the other side of the stream, across the field". Their neat country cottages are full of pretty fittings and furnishings—patchwork quilts, long, circular tablecloths and rows of pots with frilled covers—while the Store Stump, a tree stump where all the food for Brambly Hedge is kept, is stuffed with enough nuts, honey, jams and pickles to do credit to Arabella Boxer.

The Spring Story is devoted to Wilfred Toadflax's birthday and largely concerns a picnic which is secretly prepared for him. One of the many strengths of Jill Barklem's illustrations is the beautifully detailed flower drawings appropriate to each season which decorate the outdoor scenes: violets, primroses, apple blossom and blue bells for spring, honeysuckle, kingcups and buttercups, wild roses and forget-me-nots in high summer, hawthorn and crab apples, hips and blackberries for autumn. To any child close enough to the hedgerows to be able to spot the real thing, these books can provide good lessons in natural history.

The characterization of the mice is simple and not troubled by any real problems. There is a passing reference to Wilfred's naughtiness with acorn missiles. Primrose Woodmouse, the subject of the Autumn Story only has time to worry fleetingly when she is lost about the weasels before being found by loving parents and neighbours. It is a nostalgic picture of a rural idyll. The old order is preserved with Lord Woodmouse in his ancestral home (though it is a relief to note he is not above taking mint tea with the cook and that his wife Daisy is distinctly hourgeoise, being the daughter of homely Mr and Mrs Apple). Old Oak Palace itself is an intricate warren of staircases in an oak tree, leading to high ceilinged bedrooms with four-posters. Yet it is still sufficiently enamrilled to have stencilled borders on the walls; bunches of dried flowers suspended from the beams and a suspicion of Laura Ashley in the chintz. In the kitchens the food has a pleasingly simple elite: these mice seem to enjoy French cheese; Provençal crockery adorns the Welsh dresser.

The encroaching autumn and winter prevents the illustrations from becoming too coated in sugary pastels. The darkness of the night among the brambles and toadstools and the slightly haunting shadows as the mice search for Primrose introduce a darker note. The wide sweep of the snow-covered fields in the Winter Story, contrasting with the warm fireside, must suit soup inside are very appealing. This series is to be recommended but parents should not be surprised if walks are delayed while every hedgerow is searched for signs of these delightful inhabitants.

One shilling plain, eighteen-pence coloured

By Iona and Peter Opie

Taken from the introduction to A Nursery Companion edited by Iona and Peter Opie which will be published by Oxford University Press on September 25 (£8.95. 0 19 212213 4).

I Inspected it,
J Jumped over it,
K Kicked it,
L Laughed at it,
M Mourned for it,
N Nodded for it,
O Opened it,
P Peeped into it,

The History of an Apple Pie Written by Z, *from the book discussed on this page.*

Children have been forgiven for being children ever since adults discovered the fun of sharing a joke with them; and the person who, more than any other, brought about this amicacy was a young woman, Sarah Catherine Martin, who herself never had children, who indeed never married (she had already turned down a future king of England), and who does not even seem to have been thinking about children at the time. The score and more booklets which form *A Nursery Companion* were the result of an innovation she made in children's literature, which to this day is not fully appreciated, let alone celebrated annually as it should be with a public holiday.

On July 1, 1805, a middle-aged publisher, John Harris, who had acquired control of the leading children's book publishing house, but had not up to this time shown great entrepreneurial ability, issued a small squarish booklet of sixteen leaves, 5×4 inches, described on the cover simply as *The Comic Adventures of Old Mother Hubbard, and Her Dog: Illustrated with Fifteen Elegant Engravings on Copper-plate.* Inside appeared the now-familiar metrical tale of an old woman whose cupboard was bare; and each verse was paired with a graphic but not very accomplished engraving.

The probability is that Harris himself did not know who had conceived this booklet. At the beginning of the nineteenth century moralists and educators customarily had their names on the title-pages of their works; but those who sought to entertain the public remained discreet about it. They were not bold to be advancing man's spiritual and intellectual welfare like their calf-bound contemporaries, and could not therefore expect to be admired. In only one of the frolics we chose, for instance, was the full name given of its author; and more than a century was to pass before the identity was revealed of "S.C.M." or "S.M.C." the initials variously appearing in early editions of *Old Mother Hubbard.*

This anonymity was not however to prove a disadvantage. The booklet, which was priced at a shilling a copy and unlike anything that had been produced before for the young—if indeed it was intended for the young—was an instant success. Harris sold out within a few months the initial 30,000 copies. By the following year twenty editions had been printed. People in all walks of life and throughout the world began ordering copies. And when the poet John Wilcox (Peter Pindar) protested at the way the public doted on the story, he was referring not to the juvenile market but to the adult.

This, of course, is the point. Nothing appeared in the booklet which identified it as being for the young other than that it could be obtained in London "at the Original Juvenile Library, the Corner of St Paul's Church-yard", where, as was well known, books for mature readers were also on sale. In fact the booklet was produced with such style, being engraved throughout and printed on good quality paper, that it was difficult to think it could be intended for the young. Nobody, however venerable, needed to feel embarrassed at being seen with it; and everybody, even the evangelical Mrs Trimmer, thought it amusing. Harris had produced a booklet, inadvertently as it now appears, which an adult could appreciate as well as a child; and although, like any publisher of the present day who has something novel on his hands, he did not understand precisely why the book was so successful, he possessed energy and ability, and immediately set about looking for other material that could be issued in the same manner.

Before the year was out he had produced *Whimsical Incidents, or the Power of Music, a Poetic Tale by a near Relation of Old Mother Hubbard*; and thereafter a continuation of *The Comic Adventures of Old Mother Hubbard*, and *A Sequel to The Comic Adventures of Old Mother Hubbard.* But none of them had the zest of the original. In the spring of 1806, in addition to *The Adventures of Old Dame Trot*, he tried *Pug's Visit*, or *The Disasters of Mr Punch* in which the humour was too slotion avan for those days; and followed, decorously but not altogether felicitously, with *The Happy Courtship, Merry Marriage, and Pic Nic Dinner, of Cock Robin and Jenny Wren* and *The Talking Bird: or, Dame Trudge and her Parrot.* In 1807, however, he hit the jackpot again with another curiosity, a 32-line poem entitled *The Butterfly's Ball*; written—it was correctly rumoured—by a historian and member of parliament; and soon after he had the good fortune to be offered, as a sequel to *The Butterfly's Ball*, *The Peacock "At Home"* by Charlotte Smith's younger sister, Mrs Dorset, which proved as successful if not more so. The texts of both pieces are in *The Oxford Book of Children's Verse.* He then showed he was beginning to understand the type of verse required by resurrecting Cowper's *Diverting History of John Gilpin* and Goldsmith's *Elegy on Mrs Mary Blaize*, both of which had been conceived for adult diversion; and he proved that when such pieces are brought to life pictorially the audience for them, as Caldecott was to confirm, has no lower age limit. Even if a child looks the ability to appreciate each nuance in such entertainments, he can enjoy, what is almost as exciting, the genuineness of his parents' enjoyment of them.

The financial rewards of these publications were, in the meantime, being observed by Harris's competitors. They could almost be heard chanting the lesson:

Old dames who are funny
Will bring us in money;
There's wealth astronomical
In a gaffer who's comical.

A comparatively new publisher, Benjamin Tabart, who had an establishment in New Bond Street, was quickish off the mark with *A True History of a Little Old Woman, who found a Silver Penny* (May 27, 1806), followed by the *Memoirs of the Little Man and the Little Maid* in 1807. A branch of the Quaker publishing house of Darton was even more prompt with a fine Harris-type edition of *The Death and Burial of Cock Robin*, published January 31, 1806 (the dates are those engraved on the plates of the various productions), followed by Bloomfield's tale of a credulous old woman in *The Fakenham Ghost*, April 1, 1806. Didier and Tabbett of St James's Street, Pall Mall, published *The Whole Particulars of that Renown'd Sportsman Saw and his Gun*, January 1, 1808; and R. Dutton, in association with Harris and Tabart, offered R. S. Sharpe's ingenious new verse-tale *The Conjuror, or the Turkey and the Ring.*

The most sprightly, as also the most unlikely leaper onto the bandwagon was the philosopher William Godwin. By the end of November 1805, he and his second wife Mary Jane had set up as booksellers and stationers off Oxford Street, and had prepared their first publication on the lines of Harris's *Old Mother Hubbard* entitled *The King and Queen of Hearts: with the Rugaaries of the Knave.* Further, as if to ensure that the booklet, however trivial, would achieve a footnote in literary history, the friend whom Godwin had induced to write the verses—possibly to accompany engravings already executed—was the thirty-year-old Charles Lamb. Nor was this Godwin's only attempt to emulate *Mother Hubbard.* During the next couple of years he and Mary Jane produced a series of little booklets on the same model, culminating in 1808 with *Mounsier Nongtongpaw: or, The Discoveries of John Bull in a Trip to Paris*; and although the ascription has not previously been made the author of this *fou d'esprit* seems to have been Godwin's own talented ten-year-old daughter, the future Mary Shelley.

Godwin's business did not prosper; Harris's did. Godwin might express the view that the true object of education, like that of any other moral process, is the generation of happiness; yet full to appreciate that to the majority of people the vital source of happiness is the intellectual development but a cosy human relationship. From a literary point of view Godwin's publications were more worthwhile than Harris's. Some of them, such as *The Swiss Family Robinson* and the Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare*, have become landmarks; but Harris's books had, at one and the same time, a feeling of class and of kindliness that has reappeared only rarely in children's literature over the years, but is to be seen in, for instance, the publications of Felix Summerly in the 1840s, and the Puffin Picture Books in the 1940s.

In 1819 Harris, now joined by his son, sensed the way trade was going and boldly up-marketed his nursery books still further. The small squarish booklets that he had been producing, priced at "One Shilling plain, and Eighteen-pence coloured", gave little room for verse and illustration on the same page despite the skill of his engravers in lettering. He now increased the size to 7in x 4in so that picture and text, which was now usually type-set, could appear together in comfort; and, more importantly, he deterrented that in his new "Cabinet of Amusement and Instruction" the books should be issued only with their illustrations coloured. The soft outlines and deep shading that had been a feature of the copperplates hitherto were largely discarded. The new illustrations had sharp outlines, the minimum of shading, and, very often, almost blank backgrounds. Indeed, pictures of this period, which have been found unenhanced, look as flat as a stage-set designed for colour television that is viewed in black and white. But when professional colourists had been at work with their watercolours the results were wonderful. In a inflationary days the road to hackney trade, who wanted only the best, were quite prepared to pay Harris's standard price of 1s. 6d. each for the "most approved Novelties for the Nursery".

Harris commenced his new era with a splendidly resilient *Comic Adventures of Old Mother Hubbard*, and followed with a choice of such established favourites as *The History of the House that Jack Built, The History of an Apple Pie, Cock Robin*, and *A Story of Archer and Shot at a Frog.* He did not only play safe. He came to appreciate, it seems, how much his success was due to humouring the child's question, as well as the child, and several of his in the series were genuine novelties. He issued a book of pure nonsense styled *Peter Piper's Practical Principles of Plain and Perfect Pronunciation.* He published the first book of limericks, *The History of Sixteen Wonderful Old Women*, for which he offered the discerning the elegant grammar ever published, *The Paths of Learning Strewed with Flowers*, as also the most agreeable aid in the use of punctuation ever, *Punctuation Personified; or Nothing Made Easy.* More again, seriously, he was initiated. The firm of Dean and Munday issued closely-latched nautical grammars and the humane education (including an immensely popular introduction to learning music); they launched a new *Mother Hubbard* with a cast that charmed the infant Jane, *Dame Wiggins of Lee*, and the *Seven Wonderful Cats*; and for consistently undersold black, charging a shilling each for so-almost-comparable coloured books". Corvalho of Finsbury Square was another to be taken who undersold Harris, issuing a serviceable line of standard titles at a shilling each (for example, *Jack and Jill* and *Juvenile Harmony*), and Carvalho is particularly notable in having anticipated the present volume by bringing together some of his picture booklets into one bumper volume of 150 illustrations which he entitled *The Infant's Library.*

Most of all, John Marshall, whose shop in Fleet Street was set in from Harris's in St Paul's Churchyard, was a direct competitor. His publications can only be described as lush, his style as brash. When Harris produced *The History of Sixteen Wonderful Old Women* he rushed out a rival book of limericks, *Anecdotes and Adventures of Fifteen Gentlemen* with illustrations by Robert Cruikshank. He succeeded to match *The Paths of Learning Strewed with Flowers* with *The Path of Learning Strewed with Roses.* He competed with Dean and Munday in producing texts for the then-popular memory games. But he went further than Harris, producing "pressure for good children" that went outside the usual subject-matter of children's literature. He issued colour-booklets that made fun of the current fashion of the Dandies, as in later years he might have done of the Aesthetes, or the Bright Young Things, or the post plush-haired Punks. He produced titles such as *The Dandies' Ball, The Dandy's Wedding, The Dandy's Perambulations*, and *The Dandies' Alphabet.* Exactly how these skits were regarded by the heads of families in 1819 and later we do not know. We know only that the booklets sold well; and that one child, who was fascinated by them was Sheridan's eleven-year-old granddaughter, Caroline, the future numerous Mrs Norton. She emulated Mary Shelley—who incidentally was to become a friend and herself turned child-author writing the verses of a Dandy book, *The Dandies' Rout*—is not only a remarkable production for an eleven-year-old, it is one of the best of the genre, as also are some of the rarest (even Caroline's photographers do not seem to have seen a copy), and it is included in *The Nursery Companion* complete with Robert Cruikshank's illustrations.

Sir Arthur Bryant has styled the years 1812-22 the "Age of Elegance"; and the sparkle of the Regency extended even to the printings of the nursery. The children's books produced in the first quarter of the nineteenth century have an alertness and grace not achieved in any other period. The reader has the feeling from them, as is sometimes portrayed, within them, of a period in which cultured parents possessed the inclination as well as the leisure to walk hand in hand with their children, and together look at the world around them in wonder. But the temper of the times was soon to change. The belief in progress, and the possible perfectibility of man, was once again to take hold of men's minds; and, as always happens in periods of moral advancement, lightheartedness was to be frowned upon. Before George IV's ten-year-reign was over the quality of the nursery colour-books had declined. Indeed the markets for them had contracted. Their novelty had worn off. Cheap imitations were mass-produced by less fastidious publishers; and child-workers were employed to daub on paint where formerly skilled colourists had made a livelihood. By 1832 and the nonsense days of the Reform Bill, the inhabitants of the nursery were once again being looked upon as little pudding-bags to be stuffed with knowledge. The wonder is, perhaps, that people had ever thought otherwise; and the suspicion cannot be avoided that, in part, nonsense had been allowed entry to top nurseries through a misapprehension.

In 1805 nursery rhymes were not widely known and beloved as they are today; and when *The Comic Adventures of Old Mother Hubbard* was published many people imagined the tale was an original composition. If so, happened that the amateur who, as we now know, supplied the sketches for the verses, was well connected. Sarah Catherine Martin was the eldest daughter of Sir Henry Martin Bt, Comptroller of the Navy; and naturally her family moved in circles that included other people active in public life. In fact, when her father was naval commissioner at Portsmouth, Prince William Henry (afterwards William IV), who was stationed in Portsmouth in 1785-86, had been a frequent visitor at his house, had fallen in love with Sarah, and offered her nor only his heart but what was scarcely his to offer, his hand in marriage. Sarah, then aged seventeen, had apparently understood the impossibility of the situation. Instead of attempting a secret liaison, she informed her family. She was promptly sent away; and, although William continued for a while to affirm his attachment, it is a matter of history that in time he found himself able to bestow his affections elsewhere. Sarah's feelings, on the other hand, are unrecorded. It is known only that despite her evident attractiveness she never married; and that when in 1804 she and her sister Judith were staying at Kitley in Devon, the home of John Pollexfen Bastard MP, her romantic days seem to have been over; the sister the MP was courting was Judith. The legend in the Bastard family was that Sarah, an incessant talker, used to exasperate her host, and to obtain occasional respite he encouraged her to find some way of entertaining herself on her own. *The Comic Adventures of Old Mother Hubbard*, illustrated with her sketches (the manuscript still exists), was the result.

In every age, it seems, there are people who are incapable of understanding that nonsense is no sense in disguise. When confronted with a composition of no obvious meaning they instantly suspect a hidden meaning; and *Alice in Wonderland* is found to be a veiled account of religious controversy, Winnie the Pooh becomes a phallic symbol, and the story of the Hobbits is considered allegorical. Before Sarah's booklet was submitted to John Harris for publication she thought fit to insert a dedication:

To J—— B——, Esq.r M.P.
County of ——, at whose suggestion and at whose House these *notable* sketches were design'd, this *Volume* is with all suitable deference *Dedicated* by his Humble Servt

S.C.M.

This dedication had exactly the ingredients necessary to turn a little playbook into a society bestseller, and, in so doing, make a new kind of literature fashionable in the home. It not only named, cryptically, a member of parliament. It acknowledged him to be the instigator of the pretended nonsense. Who could doubt, on this evidence, that so unusual a publication was in fact a lampoon on some political figure?

Indeed we are left with only one question. When the move of nursery literature a hundred and sixty years ago is observed, how is it that educationalists and others have kept talking about the dreariness of books for the young in the past? The answer must be that the critics have been aware only of the dreary books, and that is of course understandable. The books that commonly survive from the past are either those that were expensive at the time or were unreadable. The books that give immediate delight, and are passed on delightedly from one reader to another, are seldom the ones that are set aside for posterity. Some of the booklets are now so scarce they are not to be found even in the largest libraries; and we must admit to having been assembling them for this volume for more than thirty years.

© Iona and Peter Opie 1980.

Well-heeled crocodiles

By Kicki Moxon Browne

RUSSELL HOBAN:
Arthur's New Power
Illustrated by Byron Burton
Collancz. £3.50.
0 575 02835 1

P. K. ROCHE:
Good-Bye, Arnold!
Hamish Hamilton. £3.95.
0 241 10455 6

Portraying people as animals is a stock device in children's picture books, although it is sometimes criticized by the serious-minded for its irrelevance. In most cases the animals retain some of their characteristics, or are contrasted against real human beings. More rarely, the animals are humanized in every detail; they could be exchanged for ordinary people without alteration to the text. This is the case with two new picture books, *Arthur's New Power* and *Good-bye, Arnold!*, although both these books would lose something if cast with humans.

Arthur's New Power features a family of middle-class crocodiles addicted to electrical gadgets. The family precisely appeared in the extremely amusing *Dinner in Alberta's*; but although Russell Hoban's prose is as elegant as ever, the satire in *Arthur's New Power* is just a little bit indigestible. The mother, who is a yoga fanatic, is introduced making kelp-and-carrot cocktails in the blender, while plugged into the bio-feedback machine listening to her alpha waves. The daughter is into television horror movies, which she watches wearing her Slimmo Electronic Wonder-Massage belt. Substitute humans for the crocodiles, and the mind would be drawn irresistibly to one of those television situation comedies about the well-heeled bourgeoisie—an impression strengthened by the snappy dialogue: "Have you ever thought of playing a guitar that doesn't use electricity?"—"What other kind is there? Steam?"

The sophisticated subject-matter is nicely juxtaposed with sparse drawings of the *louche*-looking crocodiles, with utterly blank expressions on their faces. But the brittle text and sombre ochre-and-grey illustrations may make it hard for anyone but an older child—or an adult—to appreciate.

Good-bye, Arnold is more obviously aimed at children of picture-book age, and deals with the love-hate relationship between two young brothers, Arnold and Webster, who are portrayed as mice. Webster feels that his older brother is hogging all the good things, and passionately wishes him out of the way. When his brother does go off to stay with his grandmother, Webster ecstatically invades his territory; he throws himself on all the toys he was not allowed to touch, and leaps into the top bunk he was not allowed to sleep in. However, as the novelty wears off he misses the noisy games and the companionship.

Again there is something comically absurd about two mice having emotions like Arnold and Webster, and believing so much as brothers do. But the real bonus of using mice rather than little boys is that the stereotypes can help to put across the universal but painful subject of sibling rivalry gently and in abstract. The low-key, affectionate text and the uncluttered illustrations, which on closer examination show themselves full of intriguing details, make it a likeable book, well worth coming back to time after time.

Inheritors

The snow is at the same time as the owl;
When it drops down to the sill, the wings close.

First question: Why should the owl
Fly down each night to peer at our painted room?

Softly the snow-dots tumble from its back
As it stands on still claws and looks in,

Second question: Why does the owl
Stare in so long at our wine and velvet chairs?

Away from its nest, old feathers, suspicious gaze,
Away if you walk near the window, but always back.

Third question: If one of us has summoned it,
Which?

—And so we sit, four men in a shared house,
In a particularly scarlet room.
Not easy as we snow down cards, four
After four an the shining table-top;

Not easy as our fingers claw them in;

Wondering what is meant by these visits
From two old interested eyes, not easy
Wondering also which of us might know.

Alan Brownjohn

Studies of children's literature

By Brian Alderson

KLAUS DODERER (Editor):
Lexicon der Kinder—und Jugendliteratur. Volume III
863pp. Weinheim: Beltz. DM 168. 3 407 565135

Bound and jacketed in a by no means inappropriate red the three impressive volumes of Klaus Doderer's *Lexicon* now stand complete. I say "Klaus Doderer" because he appears on the title-page as editor, but he is the first to acknowledge the indispensable help of his "team": the eleven staff members of the Redaktion who figure in one volume or another, the more than 350 contributors, the hospitable Institute for Research into Children's Literature of the J. W. Goethe University at Frankfurt, and the tolerant, generous Beltz Verlag who have supported throughout what must have been a fearfully costly enterprise. I say also "complete", but of the story of this last volume Professor Doderer promises us next year a Supplement "not inferior in scope to its predecessors", which will include indexes and will take into account a vast array of facts that have come to light during the fifteen years that have been spent on the present work.

According to my calculation those fifteen years have produced about 1,430 articles, which, with illustrations, occupy some 2,067 double-column pages. Roughly 680 of these articles (260 in the present volume) deal with authors, 220 (115) with illustrators, or author-illustrators, 140 (36) with non-creative professionals, and the remainder with a variety of subjects. Titles of popular books or genres (*Peter Pan*, *Tarzan*) may supplement—or at times duplicate—author articles: there are disappointingly descriptive accounts of publishing houses and book prizes etc.; and there are many genre and media surveys (fantasy, cartoon films for children etc.) or discussions of critical topics like "Pre-school literary education" or censorship. Many of the largest articles outline the history of children's literature and present activity in individual countries—the new volume includes such diverse places as Czechoslovakia, Senegal and Uruguay. Almost all articles are accompanied by extensive bibliographies of secondary end, where applicable, primary sources.

The ambitious internationalism and the sheer bulk of factual information displayed in these three volumes go a long way to excuse the many minor blemishes that can be found in them. Quite apart from the omissions, which may well be made good in the Supplement, there are all kinds of repetitions and imbalances of treatment that are probably unavoidable in a work on this scale carried out over such a period of time. (As Professor Doderer sagely remarks of the present volume—the work done in its predecessors has naturally led to a greater expansiveness. It not only includes about 20 per cent more articles, it also gives them proportionally about 20 per cent more space.) In any case, when the English-speaking world can only offer by way of competition to the *Lexicon* such eccentric volumes as D. L. Kirkpatrick's *Twentieth Century Children's Writers* or the H. W. Wilson Company's inadequate "Junior Authors" series it hardly befits any of us to grumble about the lesser inconsistencies of Klaus Doderer and his team.

What is of consequence, however, is the variable nature of the editorial principles upon which the *Lexicon* is founded, and particularly its uncertain approach to comparative methods. With the best will in the world one cannot claim that Germany has the same richness of tradition in children's literature as the English-speaking nations, but in many ways this offers a firmer base to undertake a detailed investigation of the making of children's books from country to country and the varying nature of their international acceptance. Moreover, given an Institut für Jugendbuchforschung that is central, in geographical and intellectual terms, to European scholarship, that can call upon the skills of many linguists, and that has easy access to major research collections, there is every reason to see the *Lexicon* as possessing an unrivalled opportunity to make a major contribution to the neglected area of comparative studies in children's literature.

That this opportunity has not been fully taken is not due to any lack of editorial willingness or to any narrow, national focus. (Not that such a focus need be a bad thing: it would have made possible a smaller and more unified work.) Indeed, in one of the best articles in the present volume—the seven and a half columns on "Translations"—Reinhard Brehlinger speaks from a language area nearly a third of whose new children's books originated elsewhere, and he sets out with Teutonic orderliness the issues that this raises: selection of books for translation, changes that children's books (especially) suffer in the process, extent to which books from other cultures are comprehensible to children, etc., etc. Unfortunately though, these critical issues are not matched in specific articles where they should be uppermost. What is the point of Wolfgang Schlegelmilch giving his German readers a neat descriptive assessment of Beatrix Potter, while brushing off the question of Potter translation in four lines? How frustrating for Reinhard Tabbert to say that Philippa Pearce is little known in Germany without hazarding some reason for this or commenting on the quality of translation of the three books published there. Alternatively, in an article on "Struwwelpetriade" (and with a Museum at Frankfurt devoted to that character) more could surely have been included on his wide imitation outside Germany long before the *Political Strimwelpeter* of 1899?

The highlighting of that last example, however, occasions no surprise, for the *Lexicon*'s weakness as a comparative document is supplemented by its preoccupation with the sociopolitical influences on, and of, children's literature. Certainly there is no denying that these influences exist, and certainly it is understandable that an encyclopaedia emanating from Germany will be more aware of them than one from less incremented sources. (The article in Volume III on Karl Schensinger, author of the best-seller *Hitlerjunge Quex*, shows how children's books were used for deliberate propaganda in Germany, just as that on Heinrich Wolgast shows how some political issues entered the field of children's book criticism.) Nevertheless it would have given the *Lexicon* a better critical balance if the frequency of its social criticism had been matched by a like commitment to literary criticism. All too often one finds a bland acceptance by these writers and illustrators of, do not raise any serious social issues (e.g. Eva Johanne Rubin) or finds irrelevant remarks or an intrusion a description to give a social/ideological bias. The normally competent Reinhard Tabbert produces catastrophic pieces on Stevenson, which, apart from several errors, includes the following remark on *Treasure Island*: "Besides of this affective quality of the story literature, the traces of the ideology of a nationalistically-disposed property-owning bourgeoisie subordinate significance". (I hope that Professor Dederer's promised Supplement will include an article on the translation of Grimm's Kinderbuchliterie.)

In reviews of earlier volumes of the *Lexicon* I have pointed out the drawbacks of this obsessive concern with cultural approach to children's literature and these are compounded by its left-wing bias. It is not enough that an author like Scheerbart traces a degree of criticism that is not applied to propaganda in the other persuasion, like Benno Pludra's *Mut ist ein Mosaik*, which really have been allowed to stand without comment. Surely it would have been helpful to broaden Polish readers' understanding of the socialist ideal of the new society, and provided models of a socialist morality, if not even to say that this policy leads to unbelievable distortion. (Can one really justify nineteen heavy pages on "Socialist Children's Literature" when Perrault is written off in one-and-a-half? Should the USSR really have been allowed thirty almost unreadable columns on Stephin its negligible contribution to children's books—"socialist novelly" notwithstanding—when it is only narrowly topped by the two major English-speaking countries? The fundamental objection is that this bias shutters one's faith in the Frankfurt School's ability to see and judge children's literature as anything but an instrument for promoting a questionable set of political doctrines. Such an attitude may be forgiven the founders of the Deutscher Jugendbuchpreis, but it hardly suits the editors of so apparently authoritative and so very expensive a reference work as this.

The sad knight

By Ruth Hawthorn

MIGUEL DE CERVANTES SAAVEDRA:
The Adventures of Don Quixote
Translated by J. M. Cohen
Abridged by Olive Jones
Illustrated by Georgio Him
Methuen. £5.95.
0 416 87910 1

Does *Don Quixote* work as a children's book? When are we justified in abridging great works of literature? Can we preserve the quality which we wanted to share with the wider audience?

In her introduction Olive Jones directs this new edition to people who have been put off by the great length of the original; those, of us who know about the windmills and have comforted our consciences with the intention of finishing it some day. J. M. Cohen even, who made the translation from which this version is derived, recommended skipping. We have fine skipping for you, leaving in a continuous story of Don Quixote, who has lost his wits through reading too many ballads and tales of chivalry. Much of the novel is about the ill effects of reading rubbish, and much of the joke is about the ambiguity of Don Quixote's own relationship to the genre; when is he part of it, and when satirizing it? He frequently reflects on it: in one passage Don Quixote discusses *The Adventures of Don Quixote* itself with Sampson Carrasco, disarming future reviewers with a lance that reaches over four hundred years. So soon after the invention of printing was the world filled with station bunkstall pulp! "My conclusion is, Master Bachelor, that in compose histories or books of any sort at all you need good judgment and ripe understanding. To be witty and write humorously requires great genius: Notwithstanding this there are some who compose books and sing them off like fritters." Interwoven with this sometimes explicit, sometime sidelong issue are the adventures themselves, enormously complicated, story after story and story within story. The job of abridging while doing justice to the original is a daunting one.

Olive Jones has read her scalpel most skilfully, and sewn the sentences back together so that the joins hardly show. The dignity and wit of J. M. Cohen's English have survived the surgery and there is only one place where the narrative seems to have been left out; it is the first time that a secondary plot sprouts from the middle of one of the tales so it needs particularly careful reading anyway.

I am a grateful consumer. Reading this has taken me back to the original, and given me a much deeper enjoyment of the Knight of the Sad Countenance and Sancho Panza than I got when I skimmed it myself a long time ago, as well as drawing my attention to supporting roles like that of Marluxina and the wise Teresa Panza. If the reader wearies of the sometimes relentless adventures, the pictures cheer him on. They are important partly because they give a very convincing idea of how it must have looked, and partly because they are funny and leaven the text. They are scattered very generously, two or three in a page.

Between them, Olive Jones and Georgio Him seem to have done full justice to the original; there is nothing unworthy about an abridgement of this quality if it increases the following of Cervantes's extraordinary book. I am not sure that even now it is a children's book: the stories are still heavily convoluted, and on interest in the Spain of the sixteenth and early seventeenth century which is part of what makes it so fascinating, is still rather an adult one. But I am not sure either that we would have wanted it to become a children's book. There are children, as there are adults like me, who will enjoy reading it in this form and who would have found the original too easy to put down.

Hello! I'm back again - Desmond the DINOSAUR making a welcome reappearance to tell you about our exciting new hardback series. All my favourite - and your favourite - Dinosaur books will shortly be available in hardback and there are already ten titles out with ten more in September. They're only £1.85 each - specially priced for librarians! and titles include GOING TO THE DOCTOR; DESMOND THE DINOSAUR; BEES MAKE HONEY; HOW LIFE BEGAN; CATERPILLARS TO BUTTERFLIES; HAVING AN EYE TEST and many more! Don't forget they include the sensationally received ALTHEA'S NATURE SERIES also available in paperback at 60p. I've got a new catalogue out now - write to me for a free copy - Desmond DINOSAUR
Visit us at Beechcroft House, Over, Cambridge CB4 5ND.

Shades of the past

By Mary Furness

JOHN RAE:
The Third Twin
J. M. Dent. £4.50.
0 460 06051 1

The Third Twin is a ghost story by John Rae, headmaster of Westminster School. It is about a pair of eleven-year-old twins (who, according to the blurb, are based on Dr Rae's own twins) Jonathan and Shamus. The story is narrated by Shamus and the action takes place in and around Westminster Abbey—though why these two boys should live there remains a mystery unless we are meant to assume that their fictional "Dad" does the same thing as their real-life "Dad". In the book "Dad" is a slightly frightening but ultimately to be relied on chap who is fond of saying "Take a grip" and disappearing into his study.

The story begins with the unexceptional sentence "I was frightened. Not scared or anything like that. Just frightened". The twins have decided to spend the night in the Abbey. This is more or less the last chance they will have as the Abbey is soon to be opened to the public all night in order to raise more revenue for its upkeep.

As, not scared but frightened, they try to get to sleep in the organ loft, they listen to Big Ben strike the hours. Shamus is half asleep when he hears Jonny suggesting that they should climb to the triforium sixty feet up. Shamus believes that they are not allowed there and drifts back to sleep. The dreams that Jonny is standing on the edge of the triforium to show how brave he is. Then he jumps, but Shamus tells himself that it is all right because it is only a dream.

When Shamus "wakes" midnight is striking and Jonny is snoring beside him. He gradually becomes aware of a stirring in the abbey and makes out in the gloom a crowd of people milling about. They are dressed in odd clothes from different periods of history. The ghosts (for these, it turns out, are the ghosts of everybody who has been buried in the abbey—among them Henry V, Ben Jonson, Atlantic Shovel and Mr Fox) are holding a meeting to discuss what to do about the proposed all-night opening. This will mean the end of their recreation and exercise time between midnight and dawn when they come out of their coffins. The boys and the two boys is enlisted and they go to a meeting of the Grand Council of Ghosts to discuss their tactics. The ghosts cannot themselves see to meeting with the living as the punishment for this is postponement of promotion to the next stage beyond earth, and confinement to the tomb without recreation or exercise. It is finally resolved that Jonny shall stay behind as a hostage and Shamus will have the task of convincing parents and other authorities of the truth of his story. Naturally he has considerable difficulty in this and the rest of the book is about his efforts to do so.

The Three Twins maintains the mystery—which world is the real world, Shamus's world of ghosts and the supernatural or the grown-up world of rational sense?—until the very end. The unusual setting gives the exciting plot provided tensions and make this book far much better than most of the usual offerings for this age group.

Vocal resources

By Julia Briggs

Well-stocked children's bookshops now include a revolving plastic stand from which you may (if you can) extract cellophane-wrapped cassettes of a wide variety of books from nursery rhymes to James Herriot and Frederick Forsyth. Unlike the surrounding books, however, these little boxes afford a small indication of their contents. The cover will give the title, and an author or reader's name, or perhaps merely the letter (as in Glenda Jackson's Story Book")—but little else. There will be no reference to playing time, though this may vary by anything up to half an hour. The cellophane commits you irrevocably to your small expensive parcel, whose price might purchase up to nine paperbacks, though it is likely to be shorter in terms of a word count, than any of them. So how do you choose? Presumably for the record companies this is a non-profit-making line, since they consistently opt for the simplest and cheapest use of their medium, the single reader, normally unsupported even by the most basic sound effects. It becomes difficult to judge them by criteria other than those of the reader's skills and vocal resources.

Among those I listened to the Uglow for an enchanting rendering of Russell Hoban's *The Mouse and his Child*, despite the necessarily hefty cutting. The book's fable, its knife-edge of comedy and tragedy is exactly captured, while the characters are brilliantly differentiated—the elephant a sort of Lolly Bertram, Manny Rat menacingly Brooklyn, the child high and innocent. It is related with a total involvement that precludes the traces of self-consciousness that so often surface to such readings. A marvellous performance, and a splendid introduction to the book, if you do not already know it.

Listen for Pleasure have recorded a number of classics on two tapes boxed together, which makes the cutting less drastic than in *The Mouse and his Child*, and provides outstanding value in terms of playing time since the pair cost less than the standard full-price singles. The readers are well-known, several from successes in "Jackanory". William Rushton reads *Alice in Wonderland*, sensibly speaking Alice's thoughts and words in his own voice while characterizing the other creatures amusingly. His diction is occasionally slightly fuzzy and it is always a little clipped and upper-class—an eccentric uncle perhaps—but this is an animated and unaffected reading.

Affectation is Kenneth Williams's chief stock-in-trade, however, so that he is not an entirely obvious choice of reader for *The Wind in the Willows*, another in this two-tape series. Curiously his baroque extravagance brings into focus similar elements in the text itself. The selection follows the adventures of Toad whose natural key is a comic hyperbole exactly suited to Williams's exaggeratedly rising and falling tones. The three loyal friends are also vividly realized but Ratty and Badger are clearly less well-bred than Toad—I had always imagined them as having more breeding but less money. Badger, far from being respectably hoffer-ish, sounds as if he shares a park bench with E. L. Wisty. But if something of the atmosphere of Edwardian clubland is forfeited, none of the opportunities for humour are missed and younger listeners will scarcely miss the book's rather dated purple passages.

Two cassettes from America are especially intended for a younger audience, though I wondered whether the combination of an American accent, a less rending speed and the illogicalities of Dr Seuss's nonsense verses might not baffle the uninitiated. If you know them, of course, you can join in their thumping rhythms with delight. They are read by Hope Courtie.

Jan and Stan Berenstain's reading of *The Berenstain Bears* is, by contrast, admirably clear and slow enough for anyone who can stomach the creaking doggerel and predictable plots. Mother Bear's pregnancy is so arch as to be positively blush-making. *The Berenstain Bears and Bubar* advertise as an additional attraction the music of Don Heckman, which means that the stories are divided up and sometimes accompanied by irritatingly tuneless phrases, repeated ad nauseam. There is no presence at watching the "music" in the particular story and the phrases, when they have not been pinched from Grieg, seem to come off a junk music assembly line. It is hard to see why they are there at all, except to extend the playing time which in the case of *Bubar Comes to America* is exceptionally short. The second side runs for less than thirteen minutes, so that only meanness or mindlessness can have prevented the inclusion of another story of similar length. The reader, Louis Jourdan, must have been chosen on the basis that a Gallic book deserves a Gallic reader. Sophia Loren reading Pinocchio must be on the cards. Meanwhile Louis Jourdan struggles manfully to be comprehensible against overwhelming odds.

One might wonder at the rationale of taping Babar or Orlando books whose appeal is so largely visual. The Babar translations are literal rather than elegant and the stories have disappointingly been selected from Laurent de Brunhoff rather than from the more original, complex and inventive work of his father Jean. Kathleen Hale's Orlando books read very well, however, being written in a sharply humorous style well-matched to the illustrations. Peter Bartlett who apparently gained a RADA distinction in diction and sounds it; reads them in that special reading-to-children voice that Joyce Grenfell loved to mimic. He and Barbara Bliss organize Tells Story, a comparatively recent venture into this field, which a most promising catalogue and prices well below the average, though at the moment their tapes often seem difficult to get hold of. Barbara Bliss, unlike her partner, is an exceptionally gifted reader and I greatly enjoyed her version of *The Snow Queen*, which at last begins to approach the dramatic, with the voices sharply differentiated and some sound effects, though not enough for my taste. Finally two authorial readings: Joan Aiken reads *The Wolves of Willoughby Chase* in an unexpressive monotone that does scant justice to its unremitting suspense. *Tolkien reads The Hobbit* is made up of a half-hour reading of the "riddles in the dark" episode and some bits from *The Fellowship of the Ring*. Background noise is high but those precise dannish tones belong to a born actor. If you want the whole story, there is a version by Nicol Williamson on four tapes, vividly realized, if occasionally rather gravelly in tone.

Neither of these is as enthralling as the BBC's dramatization of *The Hobbit* with Paul Daneman, made some years ago, which prompts the question, why has no one taken up the old Children's Hour formula that so magically transformed the classics and the not-so-classic (Tuytuen, Jennings and Derbyshire, Said the Cat to the Dog) into sound drama. The fantasy character of children's fiction lends itself perfectly to this medium, better even than to cartoons, with their need to simplify and distort. It can only be lack of initiative that time and again demands that a single actor orchestrate what a small group, with a few sound effects could recreate so much more powerfully. Perhaps the BBC itself, now that it has begun to market the odd recording from its archives, might release some of the old favourites—John Keir-Cross's adaptation of *The Box of Delights* might be a good place to start.

RUSSELL HOBAN: *The Mouse and his Child* read by Peter Ustinov. Caedmon CDL 51550. £5.65.
LEWIS CAROLL: *Alice in Wonderland* read by William Rushton. Listen for Pleasure TC-LFP 80125/6 (2 tapes) £4.50 each.
KENNETH GRAHAME: *The Wind in the Willows* read by Kenneth Williams. Listen for Pleasure TC-LFP 80081/2 (2 tapes). £4.25.
DR. SEUSS: *Happy Birthday to Vond and Other Stories* read by Hope Conrieti, music by the Octopus. Caedmon CDL 51287. £5.65.
JAN AND STAN BERENSTAIN: *The Berenstain Bears* read by the authors, music composed and conducted by Don Heckman. Caedmon CDL 51549. £5.65.
LAURENT DE BRUNHOFF: *Babar Comes to America and Babar's Birthday Surprise* read by Louis Jourdan, music composed and conducted by Don Heckman. Caedmon CDL 51551. £5.65.
KATHLEEN HALE: *Orlando (the Marmalade Cat)* read by Peter Bartlett. Tells Story TS 311. £3.49.
HANS ANDERSEN: *The Snow Queen* read by Barbara Bliss. Tells Story TS 313. £3.49.
JOAN AIKEN: *The Wolves of Willoughby Chase* read by the author. Caedmon CDL 51540. £5.65.
J. R. R. Tolkien reads and sings The Hobbit and The Fellowship of the Ring. Caedmon £4.95.
J. R. R. TOLKIEN: *The Hobbit* read by Nicol Williamson, Argo K4K 27. (4 tapes). £14.

Latch-Key Child

I found him
sitting in the cold dark room
watching television
and stuffing himself with sweets.

"Why didn't you", I asked
"turn the light and fire on?"
He didn't answer:
just fingered his cup, embarrassed.

And then I remembered
how I'd once waited in the dark—
thinking that if I kept still
so would the shadow by the window.

Vicki Feaver

The narrator's voice

By Colin Mills

MICKEY SPILLANE:
The Day the Sea Rolled Back
Methuen £3.50.
0 416 89620 0.

GLORIA GIBSON:
House in the Attic
Methuen £3.50.
0 416 87960 8.

JAN MARK:
The Short Voyage of the Albert Ross
Granada. £3.25.
0 246 11241 7

A recent radio profile of Arthur Ransome reminded me of what bas sometimes jarred about his classic adventure stories: they were an adult's shaping of children's experience. We never really got a child's eye view of the escapades. The voice of the author was that of a didactic, if kindly, uncle. *The Day the Sea Rolled Back* has the same flaw. Larry might only be a young boy, but the wisdom of maturity was already beginning to show; we are told of the protagonist. Larry goes on a motor cruiser in the Caribbean with his father who shows the secrets of the deep and the wheresbouts of vanished treasure galleons around the islands. He is left alone with these secrets—he is reminded of Geoffrey Crease's injunction that, in the proper adventure story, parents should be "perfect, distant or dead". An eerie and unexplained natural phenomenon enables Larry and his friend, Josh, to explore the wreck, pursued by the dastardly Cabot brothers, as mean a pair of criminal characters as I have met. One might guess from Mickey Spillane's adult books, there is some taut, urbane prose but there is a hint of writing to a formula in the derring-do amidst the hidden wrecks. We get little sense of the boys' involvement and the conclusion is perfunctory and unsatisfactory.

Gloria Gibson's book restores hope in the Pied Piper series and its publisher's promise of "lively and imaginative stories". It is vigorous and engaging: fifteen separate episodes which, woven together, give a vivid montage of the author's childhood in the New Zealand outback of the 1920s. The banter and camaraderie of family life is skilfully evoked as is the elemental nature of activities: swimming, rabbit shooting, riding and, in a dramatically drawn episode, surviving a rising river flood. The narrator, Jiles Tyke Tylar, is constantly weighing and evaluating her experiences. She wants to be a writer when she grows up and a telling sub-plot is here in her efforts to match these real experiences with a storyteller's art. Gloria Gibson has verve, wit and a direct voice which makes the stories ideal for reading aloud.

Jan Mark has already shown that she can combine the direct voice with the storyteller's art to depict sharper issues. Steven, the central character in her new book, writes his first story during the action of the novel. It is an important achievement for a shy, diffident boy. In his imaginative, secondary world, he is chased by a shark called John, but he defeats it and survives. In his real world—a nondescript Kentish village—he is bullied and mocked by the older, less intelligent, John. Through the raft of the tide, self-knowledge and not a little courage, he triumphs over the boastful rival. As in the earlier novels, there are the pervasive mental maps, the masterly portrayal of shifting moods, the potential power within the commonplace. A deserted field is "a brown desert with sly serpents lurking behind every clod of earth. At any moment a heavy dinosaur might come lounging round the corner, leaving footprints like moon craters, and clanking louder than a lorry load of milk churns". At its simplest level, as a narrative tale, it may not satisfy the younger reader; the more sophisticated will be challenged, as by fables. The best compliment is that Jan Mark's writing, in its artlessness, catches the stories that children the age of her leading characters write themselves: she always gives the child's eye view.

Domus Angusti Puensis
A Latin Version of A. A. Milne's The House at Pooh Corner
Translated by Brian Staples
Methuen. £3.95. 0 416 88550 0

Salve iterum Pu, delicise Britannorum omnium prudentum, converse in Latinum. Quid denique dicamus de animalibus Milnei, de Pue, Porcello, Lepore, lore, Canga, Rue illo parvulo? Manum illum felicem colunt lonumerabiles, tam iuvenes quam senes, orbis totae. Valde iuvat iongere linguam latinam ex schola vix memoria comprehensam, cum facetis lepidis et angliissimis Milnei fabularum. *Winnie-ille-Pu* panin post annum MCMLV Latino reddidit Doctor Alexander Lonardus, et liber prosperrima vendebatur. Nunc hoc opus elegantor redditum est a Briano Stapleisio, qui olim in bibliothecis publica Birminghamiae exercebatur. Editio haec, *Domus Angusti Puensis*, sicut *The House at Pooh Corner*, mta exornata est ab Ernasto H. Shepardo. Hoc solum addimus est—Imago Pui togati atque lauriferi. Quocumque ibunt, et quodcumque eis obiter accidet, hoc in loco praecantato summa in Silva sito puellus et Ursus suus semper ludent.

Philip Howard

Looking it up

By Mary Warnock

Everyone knows that there are children of eight or nine with an adult reading age, and the inquisitive insatiability of an old-style professor. Other children of fourteen can hardly read, and regard books as an enemy and a threat. How can an encyclopedia cater for all of these? And what, in any case, is an encyclopedia supposed to be for?

Looking at a collection of new, or fairly recent, children's encyclopedias, it is the second question that remains truly puzzling. Are encyclopedias simply a way of getting one's prep done? Few parents can be unaware of the occasional urgent need for an encyclopedia to meet a crisis. It is Sunday, and, by Monday morning an essay has to be written on the invention of television, the ice-age or the Boston Tea Party, perhaps on all three. Libraries are shut, real books, even if improbably available, are too long; only an encyclopedia will do. In the old days, the Oxford Junior Encyclopaedia was a godsend. If one had the right volume. None of the present lot is as good, and it is going out of print. Of course it was expensive (£60 now for the whole set) but you could buy it bit by bit. Its great merit was that it did not waste words. Every article was close-packed with literate and intelligible information. This is crucially important, where what is written is read intently, in hope that the whole essay may be extracted from one, or at most two, articles, with only a decent amount of padding. Neither the *Macmillan Children's Encyclopaedia* nor Bisrk's are anything like up to this standard.

Macmillan's has quite useful photography, is arranged in fairly intelligible topics, but has a chaotic index, which, confusingly, refers to the whole book as "Our World", and has several cases of misreference to particular pages. Blocks is fully alphabetical. It has drawings, mostly black and white, but occasionally bursting unaccountably into colour. It is best on particular short entries about people, or old-fashioned primary-school subjects like "Trees". It has a brief, quite unintelligible page on Television, no entry for Radio, nothing on Computers, Electronics or Silicon chips. It dates itself by such phrases as "about ten years ago". It really is not worth the money, being infinitely less good than the English Larousse, whose style it partly follows.

But perhaps the compilers of encyclopedias would not agree that their aim was to do people's homework. Some address themselves to much younger children, aged from five upwards. These books are, for the most part, of an astonishingly low standard. The pictures tend to be crude and hideous, but also pointless. Why, for example, should the Hamlyn *Boys and Girls' Encyclopaedia* illustrate "The World of Art" only by a picture of a romantic looking person painting some sunflowers, a man in a white tie looking suspiciously like Richard Nixon, but labelled Leonard Bernstein, and a picture of Notre-Dame at Ronchamp, bearing the legend "Le Corbusier designed houses as 'machines for living'"? It is hard, admittedly, to predict what pictures may fire the imagination of children when they are very young, beginning to handle books and turn the pages.

I can just about conceive of some two or three year old loving this book for its strangeness, and its very nice old-fashioned newsagent's smell. Also the print is black and clear, and it is possible that a reluctant reader of twelve or so might like to read it right through. But it, and other similar books, make highly contradictory demands. Why should a six-year old, say, who wanted to find out how television works, think of looking in Communications. And if he did, would he be helped by a picture of the inside of a studio at Thames Television, and the opening statement "We use words when we talk"? None of the cheaper encyclopaedias that I have looked at (Ward Lock's *First Picture Encyclopaedia*, the Hamlyn *Children's Encyclopedia*, Purnell's *Concise Encyclopaedia*) is free from this confusion of aim, or frivolity of presentation, though, as a rule, the more expensive ones are better. Those which are based on specific questions often fall into absurdity. Who ever asked the question "What do sports consists of in our part of the world?" or "How do people make themselves look more attractive?" However, apart from its ridiculous format, the Hamlyn *Question and Answer Encyclopaedia* is well illustrated and again might be extremely appealing to a late reader, who is bored by children's story books.

At the end of all these large sized books, some of which are nothing but a trap for the gullible, it is pure pleasure to come upon the *Junior Pears Encyclopaedia*. Here at last the tone is grown-up, not in the sense of being pompous, but dearthed honest, straightforward and funny. Among the articles, most of which are quite short, are to be found great detailed lists, like an infinitely expanded back part of a schoolboy's or school girl's diary: the periodic table, makes of cars, with their insignia, ranks and badges of the armed services, the planets with the distances from the sun, Wimbledon champions since 1920, and every kind of delightful cricket record. It has lists of foreign phrases used in English, and even a list of Americanisms that might prove misleading that rather a delicious one, is "cracker" meaning "biscuit" in, if "biscuit" means "bun" in, if "bun" means "cake"? Why not "trunk" meaning "yard" (as in "garden")? It is altogether a book, and a superb present for one from eight to the end of or beyond. The only thing I looked up and failed to find was computer (though binary number there) or electronics. But these deficiencies will be made good. It is, after all, an annual. I shall certainly buy it next year.

Macmillan Children's Encyclopaedia, Macmillan, 2 volumes. £15.95. 27393 1

Black's Children's Encyclopaedia, A. and C. Black. 2 volumes. £7.95. 0 7136 1682 2

Boys' and Girls' Encyclopaedia, Hamlyn. £2.50. 0 600 36017

First Picture Encyclopaedia, Ward Lock. £3.95. 0 7063 5359 0

Children's Encyclopaedia, Hamlyn. £4.95. 0 600 36015

Concise Encyclopaedia, Purnell. £4.95. 0 361 01951

All Colour Question and Answer Encyclopaedia, Hamlyn. £4.95. 37457 0

Junior Pears Encyclopaedia, Pears Books. £4.50. 0 7207 1383 3

Audience at risk

By Jeremy Treglown

KEN CAMPBELL:
Skungpoonery
Methuen Young Drama. £1.50.
0 413 33910 6

PETER FLANNERY and MICK FORD:
The Adventures of Awful Knawful
Methuen Young Drama. £1.50.
0 413 46630 2

Children taken to the theatre are children at risk. I don't know which is worse, Peter Pou, which encourages the little mites to fasten their baits to a long piece of wire and throw themselves out of an upstairs window, or a play like *Skungpoonery*, which incites them to tie up ladies in their own knickers and push them head-first into boxes of tomatoes. If that isn't depraving and corrupting, what is?

Setting the children aside, at least a man could safely take his wife and nanny to Peter Pan. One couldn't be so sure about *Skungpoonery*, which is distinctly satirical, for example, in its treatment of law and order, both civil and domestic. In the very first scene a young constable is humiliatingly shown being sent off to work by his mother:

P.C. Nicholas Wibble: But all the other policemen wear boots.
Mrs Wibble: That's because they haven't got nice sandals.
Wibble: Well why've I always got to be different?
Mrs Wibble: It's not a case of 'being different', Nicholas, it's a case of being sensible. It's unhealthy to have your feet laced up inside those big clumping boots all day in the hot weather . . . Nicholas! . . . What's that? . . . On your tie?
Wibble: Nothing.
Mrs Wibble: . . . Egg dribblings. Look at that. And I all nicely ironed it yesterday morning. . . . Well you'll just have to wear your bow-tie.
Wibble: O no.

And so on.

So it's obvious that you need to be careful who you go with. But for a jokey night out with a group of mature adults, a stag party, say, Ken Campbell's play would be hard to beat. The title is the name of a game invented by two of his characters, a Beckettish duo who are dissatisfied with their vocabulary, and hence with their surroundings. Like the inventive Campbell himself, they want "A whole new range and catalogue of items and activities", and find it by inventing words and than inventing the item or activity they seem to fit: *jellyskirtslinging*, for example, "where you rip a woman's skirt off, empty a huge jelly into it, wrap it up and bat her on the head with it".

Such activities aren't appreciated by those they are done to—here, the jellyskirtslinger's wife; elsewhere, members of the police force. The *skungpoonery* opponents are vividly depicted through Campbell's good ear for oppressive turns of phrase: "Stop that before it starts", Mrs Hambottom tells her husband some time before he takes his memorabilia revenge; and Sergeant Snuff, seeing that PC Wibble has been chewing his pencil, says "I want all this nastiness and sucked straggle cut off by Inspection tomorrow".

It is harder to be sure whether Peter Flannery and Mick Ford's *Awful Knawful* works, just on the evidence of the published script. It's a boisterous SF show, with plenty of skilful manipulation of stage temps and some good scenes, including one in which a surgeon operates on members of the audience. It went down well in the RSC's production at the Warehouse, but the story—involving a sinister Voice from the East bent on world domination is rather shapeless, and good verbal gags are thin on the ground.

The main problem again, though, is that it's surely not a family show. It involves a mad professor who thinks he has invented two perfect children until they turn out to be bredeemably anarchic. Children only get never-excited by stories like this and Campbell's. They are drawn to imaginatively, have a terrifically good time and end up never-satisfied. Safer to take them along to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in Regent's Park, is my advice.

Botanical bandwagons

By Lucy Micklethwait

BESHLIE:
Traveller's Joy
Granada Gallery Five. £4.95.
0 246 11246 8

Who is Beshlie? She is a "Traveller", which is what gypsies like to be called, though she is not, as is insinuated on the flyleaf of this book, a real gypsy. "You hin eatin' hiney-brambles 'stead a' cutin' the dashels" said her grandfather's gardener to the gardener's boy. That side of the family, at least, must have led a settled existence. With long flowing skirts, a horse-drawn painted caravan packed with birds and animals, a companion called Dominic and a passionate love of wild flowers, she is just what a gypsy might be in a fairy tale gypsy. What is more she can make a living out of all this because she paints.

For some years Gallery Five has been printing greetings cards which Beshlie designed. Partially clad animals—a frog in a waistcoat, a mole in trousers, a mouse in an apron—go about their business in front of rustic foliage. Her first books for Gallery Five, *The Wood* and *Smallsleep*, used these pictures as illustrations to stories more or less forced to fit.

More recently, Beshlie designed a series of cards in traditional botanical illustration. They are good, for it is in painting and painting of wild flowers that Beshlie's talent lies. Each card shows one plant, drawn, observed and carefully recorded, accompanied by the scientific name of the plant described. The insect happily nuzzled on it are the common and Latin names of that plant. Now Gallery Five has jumped further onto the bandwagon for it is based on these designs that Beshlie's new book, *Traveller's Joy*, has been constructed. Each one of the twelve botanical illustrations occupies a full page. Opposite it is the text and this is a vignette of a Beshlie mouse or rabbit acting out the common name of the plant described. The vignettes originally appeared as backs of the cards, one of which the juxtaposition in the book of formal botanical illustration by Beatrix Potter-type, charming sketches is not a happy one.

Throughout the book emphasis is placed on the various uses given to plants by the country folk who live among them. The introduction enticingly mentions John-of-the-warrior's-wound, for-sunburn-in-France, hobble-gobbles, ring-a-ring-o'-roses, down-the-lane-jump-up-and-kiss-me, higgy-piggy and jump-up-and-scrumples"; curiously there is no further reference to these popular names, so you never discover what plants they belong to. The amount of information given varies from plant to plant. About geranium cranesbill we learn quite a lot: its common names in Latin mean "Geranium pratense", and its other country names, "blue-beans" and "gypsy", are explained. On the other hand, we never discover why brown knapweed is called "centaurea nemoralis" or "dragon-boys"; all we learn is that it reminds the writer of a cardinal and a Welsh cob, both of whom have a taste for it. Much of the text is taken up by anecdotes, not always related to the plant in question. At the back of the book is a list of Latin specific names translated into English; fascinating in itself, half of the names which appear earlier in the book are not listed.

Some care has been taken with the presentation of this book: the bow-top wagon surrounded by traveller's joy on the cover and wild flowers which spill over into the end-papers are delightful. But in the end it fails to satisfy. The greetings cards and a small amount of padding make a very thin book, and a dozen wild flowers are far too few to be useful for reference. Beshlie's powers of observation and draughtsmanship (praised by Augustus John on the flyleaf) are such that she could illustrate an excellent botany book. It is something to look forward to.

Animal Kingdoms

Catechism

It used to be held that birds had wings
Like angels and had taken to part
In the primal crime, and hence they lived
In the sky, near to God.

Later it was shown
That they possessed two legs like men and like men
They fell.

Into our mouths? That was no fault of ours.
Besides, the mangers are full of dogs.

Dogma

Cats have four legs like us but
They do not speak in good plain short sharp terms
Like we do.

It is cats that give dogs a bad name.
Their bite is worse than our bark.
They think they have nine lives—
But we shall have our day.

Bird's-eye View

Dogs are hogs. Cats are rats.
As for men, they sigh and they sob over our bodies
But go on trying to kill two of us with one stone.

Birds are at the top of the tree.
We have poets by the nestful.
Our brains are enormous and we are much prettier than girls.

What does little birdie say?—
Just wait till we have flown away!
You would do well to watch us.

D. J. Enright

The glory that was . . .

By Michael Trend

PHILIPPA STEWART:
Growing up in Ancient Greece
Batsford. £4.50.
0 7134 3376 0

Women washing at a fountain under a colonnade, taken from a vase of about 520 BC. It is one of the illustrations in Growing Up in Ancient Greece.

Children are endlessly fascinated by what life was like in former times, but in looking back at the past they want to have it both ways. History was both much more violent (fun) than now, and, at the same time, it was just as homely and comfortable. If asked to "recreate" some notable scene from the past, children invariably choose the bloodiest of bloodbaths; but once this craving has been met they chiefly look to the past to be reassured. In a museum they will wearily troop past marble busts of the great Alexander, the coinags of Imperial Rome, the lapidary decrees of the Pharoahs in order to spend hours relishing the domestic exhibits. Only a pair of Roman shoes or an ancient toothpick can hope to elicit anything approaching the same enthusiastic response as an ancient corpse (preferably mummified) or a case full of instruments of torture.

The "Growing up in Ancient Bagdad/Stuart England/Timbuctoo . . ." type of book has long satisfied both these responses. Until recently, as most of us know, history was taught in schools was the story of battles and invasions. In reaction modern books for children tend to go to great extremes to avoid such a bias but the resulting picture of the social life of the ancients suffers greatly from being dissociated from a chronological framework. Our Victorian ancestors also had a particular habit of using this type of book to convey the most vivid and edifying homilies on how life should be correctly conducted—instructing their children through their particular view of the past, a tendency often shared by some present-day Marxist historians.

Philippa Stewart's *Growing up in Ancient Greece* manages to avoid most of these pitfalls. She has chosen the overview approach but states clearly that it is the Classical period of Athenian history with which she is mainly concerned. She does not use her subject to lecture her readers, although I did detect a constant desire to "apologize" for the ancient practice of slavery. Miss Stewart's book begins with a brisf historical introduction and then goes on to describe a Greek home, the birth of a child, the life of an Athenian boy and girl, Spartan discipline, and the sort of work that people in the ancient world undertook. She is very good at explaining how different a country Greece is from the United Kingdom, but she does not add up to a convincing whole.

Miss Stewart is, of course, very selective in her choice of examples but one begins to feel that the young reader of this book will go away with the idea that the Athenian man spent all morning practising his "craft" and all afternoon engaged in "democratic life-and-duties", while his counterpart in Sparta was busily perfecting his manly manliness and slaying Helots. . . . And the poor women cooking and keeping out of the man's way all day. Reading a play like *The Bacchae*, demonstrates how very odd ancient life would seem to us, how very unreassuring; the comedies remind us of how coarse and uncomfortable we would find life in ancient Greece. But then no child wants to believe that life is, after all, avar violent or vulgar, and Miss Stewart knows her audience well. In swinging away from the faults of its popular historians of recent times we must take care not to present the past in too bland a light. One of the pictures in the book illustrates this danger well. Before us is a massive animal hall, well-lit, airy, with floating white doves, a gorgeous peacock. There is a Doric colonnade surrounding a pool, groups of people reclining on couches, a comely girl plays the harp—the whole as splendid and as fallacious a vision of the past as one could want. The caption to this picture reads simply "Inside a home in Athens. This is a reconstruction".

Pets from the wild

By Sheelagh Stephens

CAROLINE O'HAGAN (Advisory Editor), JUDITH ALLAN (Illustrator):
It's Easy to have a Snail to Stay
0 7011 2499 7
It's Easy to have a Worm to Stay
0 7011 2500 4
It's Easy to have a Caterpillar to Stay
0 7011 2501 2
Batto and Windus. £1.50 each.

These three books, in a series, are designed to introduce the idea that it is easy to look after common "wild" animals as pets. Each twenty-four page booklet has clear, simple colour illustrations showing the mice and some of the salient features of the animals concerned. The illustrations are also meant to show parents and children exactly how to go about capturing, caring for, and eventually returning the animals to their natural habitat. The instructions are on the whole direct, sensible and adequate, with the possible exception of the instructions for making the worm's box ("Get two sheets of Perspax or glass and three pieces of wood and make a tall narrow box that you can see into"), and one illustration in the caterpillar book which shows us the life size caterpillar with ten pairs of breathing holes, while the text refers to nine pairs.

The books give practical advice about the conditions under which the animals are likely to be most comfortable—snails like to be somewhere cool, and do not like to be banged about, most caterpillars feed especifically on one species of plant, worms like cool moist earth, if your caterpillar forms a chrysalis it will need to be sprinkled with water from time to time, etc. The books also specify how long the animals should stay—two weeks for the worm, a week for the snail. Continuing interest in the welfare of the snail is suggested by the simple ploy of marking it with a small piece of Elastoplast, thus making it recognizable (though one wonders how long the Elastoplast would survive the damp foliage of the snail's natural habitat). The books emphasize the care with which the animals should be returned to the wild—the snail covered with leaves, the worm gently buried, and the moth or butterfly allowed to dry unaided.

The series encourages good principles in caring for animals based on a sound appreciation of observing their behaviour patterns and certainly should stimulate children's interest in the morphology and habits of everyday creatures.

Where Art Thou?

I wrote a children's fantasy
Full of clean fun and unspoken morality,
For little Alice, Alice my idol reader.

I ran to take her the very first copy,
But Alice was living with some feller,
Alice was on the Pill, Alice was crotchety.
I wrote it pretty swiftly,

It couldn't have been published faster,
But Alice was on the Pill already.

In the old days up at the varsity,
We talked a lot about "maturity"—
Could this be what we were after?

D. J. Enright

Reviewers reviewed

By Colin Channell

ZENA SUTHERLAND:
The Best in Children's Books
The University of Chicago Guide to Children's Literature.
546pp. University of Chicago Press.
0 226 78059 7

There is an honourable American tradition of criticism of children's books and the Center for Children's Books, established thirty-five years ago at the University of Chicago, is a prolific disseminator of this subject's products. Their weekly bulletin, which has an international readership, aims at "evaluation and analysis of books in terms of uses, appeals and literary quality". This collection of 1,400 reviews attempts to present "the best" from the five years 1973-78.

The brief introduction to this volume makes explicit the criteria by which the judgments are made. The best books have a distinctive "literary" style, we are told. The elements contributing to this style tell us a great deal about what the reviewers value: a well-constructed plot; sound characterization; perceptive themes; dialogue that flows naturally and is "appropriate to the reader's age, education and milieu". Within the terms of these declarations, the criticism succeeds. There is a perfunctoriness about many of the reviews but reading them is an enjoyable enterprise: testing one's own opinions on familiar, getting acquainted with many American authors unpublished here.

The criticism follows a hallowed tradition which is familiar this side of the Atlantic: the discerning adult choosing for the child. The best British exponents have carried out this task so well for so long: Naomi Lewis, Margery Fisher, Brian Alderson, John Rowe Townsend. Indeed, one misses in these uniform critiques, their individuality and their idiosyncrocies. The critic of children's books needs to be a judge of quality and an analyst of technique, but, as an innovative group of British critics (Aiden Chambers, Margaret Meek, Nicholas Tucker) are beginning to teach us, there are other vital functions to be served. The most important of these is the no less discerning task of seeing how books, children and writers have actually changed. We may be in need of a more comprehensive definition of "the best" than is offered here so that we may reflect new kinds of books and, more important, the interests of new readers.

The indexes in this volume indicate zealous classification and categorization. The books reviewed have been assiduously sifted for "developmental values": the popular themes ("age-mate relations", "intercultural understanding") may teach us something about contemporary cultural imperatives, or more about what adult reviewers want to find. There is no index on "curricular uses" which tells us a great deal about what the reviewers value: a well-constructed plot; sound characterization; perceptive themes; dialogue that flows naturally and is "appropriate to the reader's age, education and milieu". Within the terms of these declarations, the criticism succeeds. There is a perfunctoriness about many of the reviews but reading them is an enjoyable enterprise: testing one's own opinions on familiar, getting acquainted with many American authors unpublished here.

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The criticism follows a hallowed tradition which is familiar this side of the Atlantic: the discerning adult choosing for the child. The best British exponents have carried out this task so well for so long:

Forty years on . . .

The following article appeared in the childrens pages of the TLS *for June 1, 1940, under the title "What Boys and Girls Read".*

It is a natural tendency of adult human beings to impose their will on the younger of their kind—a self-tribute which academic training and function elevate to a duty. Yesterday this way of putting it would probably have seemed shocking; to-day it is admitted as arguable, to-morrow the tendency it stigmatizes may be regarded as an outworn tenet of an obsolete educational system. Children of the future, it seems, may be allowed to shape their course of reading without prohibition—because in spite of appearances to the contrary it will be recognized that they know better than their elders what is good for them. Such revolutionary theories, it is true, have been proffered before, but they have smelled of "crank" schools and thereby been suspect; now comes an unimpeachable authority to sanctify many such upsetting doctrines with the voice of wider experience. Mr A. J. Jenkinson, who is a Lecturer in Education of the University of Manchester, recently sent out a *questionnaire* to some 3,000 pupils between 12 and 16 in Secondary and Senior (elementary) schools. The *questionnaire* was boldly comprehensive; it demanded details of every type of reading pursued outside school study books, and it was deliberately addressed to this interesting age group—interesting because apparently no one has yet successfully solved the problem of teaching English literature to it in its earlier stages.

Nobody knows better than Mr Jenkinson that such investigations are apt to possess a limited value, but, nevertheless, he has used the results as a basis for a book—"What Do Boys and Girls Read?—which everybody in contact with children would be the better for reading. Although Mr Jenkinson's findings are naturally concerned with the primary effects of the evidence yielded, his conclusions join them to the roots of our social system, for he declares—and who will deny it?—that for the average child the quality of living determines the quality of reading, and that if good literature is provided, within the range of the child's comprehension, he will not exercise conscious discrimination against it. What more could be expected? If a voice is raised to demand a veto against the monstrously successful "bloods," it will not obtain Mr Jenkinson's unqualified support. . . .

Thirty years ago, on June 6, 1950, the TLS *carried a notice of the appearance of the* Eagle.

Ten numbers of *Eagle*, a strip-cartoon weekly addressed to children (Hulton Press, 3d) have now appeared, and already it is possible to hail this new venture as an established success. To begin with, it has worked out an excellent formula for combining amusement and interest: the gadgeteer, the modelmaker, the sports fan, the campaigning addict, are catered for as skilfully as simpler souls who maintain a purely disinterested love of comic strips. In short, *Eagle* is already turning into a source of furtive pleasure for parents.

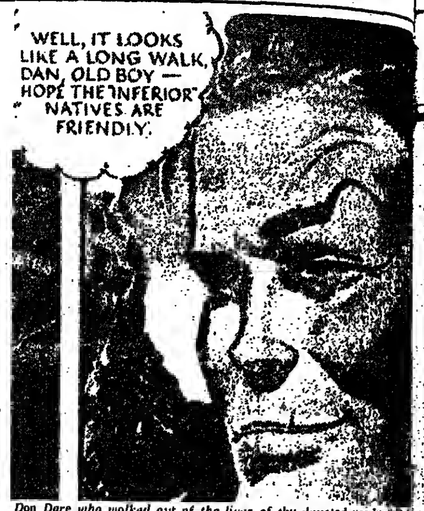
In addition to pictures—and here, incidentally the colour reproduction might be more pleasing—serials and features are included. The serials are straightforward adventure stories which totally avoid the delirious note so often caught elsewhere by Mr Arthur Marshall. An occasional snatch of dialogue may, it is true, give perverse pleasure to the elders:

"What is my best route to the 'varsity?"

"Route 'C', this dirty", answered Ray.

"Have you found out anything? If so, better pass it on to me in case I get through, and you are poisoned."

In its context, however, this curious interchange does more than reflect the admitted perils of higher education. And it seems likely that *Eagle*, which avertly sets itself a standard as high as can be consonant with a national circulation among children from every type of home, will perform a most valuable service by offering plenty of unpretentious entertainment and a little unobtrusive instruction without tumbling into reckless sensationalism of one extreme or vapidity at the other. Even a Biblical narrative strip which recounts a portion of the Acts in terms, approximately, of *King Solomon's Mines* is more surprising than offensive; and the final picture, showing Barnabas on horseback riding away from a Roman patrol with a balloon at his lips on which are inscribed the words: "Sorry, Centurion, can't stop now", rounds off one number of *Eagle* with high expectations of the next.



Don Dare who walked out of the lives of thu devoted readers of the numbers of Eagle *is reprinted on this page) to be destined to come to life again, but this time on our television screens with the forthcoming TV production of the space epic. Addicts can still satisfy their craving with* The Best of Eagle, *(Michael Joseph £5.95, 0 7181 1566 X), edited by Marcus Morris the founder of the comic. Peter Keating in the TLS review (October 28, 1977) of the book says of Eagle that "it was very much of its time, perhaps just a little too good to be true in a tiny bit too innocent". Lest Dan's bullpup makes readers fear that the sub-Venusian cataract has perverted innocence into racial prejudice, should he pointed out that Dare is quoting the infamous Sondar.*

Index of books reviewed

commentary

"Head of Shakespeare", a watercolour done by Oskar Kokoschka in 1959 as a possible poster-design for Richard Buckle's Quatercentenary Shakespeare Exhibition. Buckle has contributed it to the Covent Garden Opera House's Royal Gala Auction, being held on October 1. Among the varied lots stamped up by supporters are Elton John's multi-coloured rhinestone-encrusted bicycle, stage and costume designs by Piper, Jedrinsky, Scaga, Gantcharova, Osbert Lancaster and Laura Knight, lithographs by Chagall and Hockney, the original costume worn by Nijinsky as Petrouchka, and sundry paintings and objets d'art. There are watches and brooches, salt-cellars and dessert-stands. There is an eighteenth-century chandelle, a collection of cards signed by Caruso, McCormack, Tetrazzini, Chaliapin and Melba, and a Tristan score annotated by Solti. Lot 112 is a 1977 BMW "Bimobile": only 12,000 kilometres on the clock, and you could fill the bicycle-shaped cabinet with Lots 4 and 5: Lafite 1945 C.B., Pauillac 1er Cru Classé, one bottle, and Lafite 1955 C.B., Pauillac 1er Cru Classé, three bottles.

Against the grain

By John Creaser

Timon of Athens
The Other Place

Two moments epitomize the best of the productions which the Royal Shakespeare Company has given at The Other Place, Stratford, in recent years. First, there is Ian McKellen—with an anarchic gesture at once defiant and hopeless—setting swinging the solitary lamp which shone overhead during the hurried closing minutes of *Macbeth*, so that it wildly illuminated the fight scenes and came to rest in time to pick out Malcolm and his exhausted, dispirited followers among the surrounding darkness. Secondly, Suzanne Bertish and Edward Petherbridge as Masha and Vershinin in Act 2 of *Three Sisters*, sitting a few feet apart at the very front of the acting space, half turned away from the rest of the company. They waited for their tea and hardly spoke, but all the action behind them came to the audience permeated by the oppressiveness of their thwarted love.

The scenes were so strong partly because they accepted the nature of The Other Place as a shed for acting in. *Macbeth* used the naked theatricality of the setting, with all the paraphernalia visible above the actors' heads. Those productions (both, as it happens, by Trevor Nunn) created intimacy out of the cramped conditions, and with it a rapport between cast and audience strengthened by a frank acceptance of the theatre's limitations.

In the current production of *Timon of Athens* directed by Ron Daniels, however, The Other Place is merely cramped. Daniels has imported a shimmering set by Chris Dyer which is fascinating as carpentry but a theatrical dead weight. In the first half (up to Act IV Scene ii), the actors are set apart on a fussily-planked platform, and if this is meant to suggest that the characters are histrionic and self-exulting, it is not borne out in the acting. For the second half, when Timon is in the woods, most of the platform is packed away to reveal what looks like an intricate relief-map made of wood, surrounded by all too many cubbyholes where Timon scrabbles for roots, stones and nuggets of gold, and topped by festoons of fishermen's netting which suggests Ye Ancient Mariner's Bar at some pub. This is supported by an insistently orchestrated soundtrack of animal cries, birdsong, waves and thunder.

The pernickety set is of little practical or symbolic help in the cast, and becomes ludicrous in the last scene, when Timon's hair has to do duty for the besieged city of Athens. The Senators on the ramparts agree to descend but, cut off on a balcony, are unable to do so, and Alcibiades reads Timon's epitaph while Richard Pasco, as Timon, huddles within touching distance under some nets. The "rich conceit" of Timon's eloquently silent and sudden departure from life—"his everlasting mansion/ Upon the beached verge of the salt flood"—is sacrificed to the irrelevant intricacies of the setting.

Most of the production is as much against the grain of the text as the set is against the spirit of the theatre. *Timon* is at once a schematic and a deeply ambiguous play, and Timon himself is both grand and petty in his liberality and in his misanthropy alike. Daniels seems to see only a moral exemplum of a good man undone by flatterers. Consequently the Steward, who in his exasperated criticism of Timon but having fidelity to him is a crucial figure in the text, is played merely as an earnest, innocent lightweight. By RSC standards, there is a dispiriting lack of nuance in the performances. Richard Pasco creates Timon's physical decay convincingly, but the character's obsessiveness, petulance and profound underlying weariness with life are hardly there. All too often high volume is made to do duty for strong feeling. Here again the production is ill-suited to its confined setting. As he orates, Pasco seems almost to be pushing the audience away, whereas, if memory serves, the quiet and grating intensity of Paul Schofield as the misanthropic Timon in the last RSC production fifteen years ago invited and involved the audience.

It is frustrating that a play so rarely seen at Stratford should be receiving such a superficial production. An exception should be made, however, for the moralism Aptommatus of John Carlisle in the earlier scenes, who alone, like an embittered and disaffected cleric, seems to be speaking out of moral experience.

Knights of the upturned tea-chest

By A. N. Wilson

Launcelot and Guinevere
Old Vic

Narrative, pure story-telling, is everything in Malory. It does not matter whether we believe what he says. He is not, technically, "a great writer". He has all the casual apparent incompetence of the brilliant raconteur, and it is this that keeps us listening or turning the pages.

Gordon Honeycombe's deft compression of the Morte d'Arthur began as a radio adaptation. I did not hear it, but I imagine it was excellent. He has chosen all the best bits, and in not much more than two hours conveys Malory's endearingly mixed qualities: poignancy and coarseness, holiness and triviality all bundled together at a breakneck narrative speed.

As a production for the stage, it does not quite come off. Timothy West, narrating as Malory himself, does his best, which if very good, reading at a fair speed without too much actorly "expression" in his voice. But the better he is, the more one sees that the stuff he is reading out cannot be acted. It is not merely that many of the most memorable moments—the appearance of the Grail, the endless clash of enormous battles, or the departure of the King by barge over the water—could never be done on stage. As the evening wears on, there seems to be less and less connexion between the stories which are being read aloud, self-sufficient in themselves, and the almost pathetic desire of the supporting cast to be doing something while Malory speaks. (Sir Bedivere, for instance, in the closing business of coming and going with Excalibur, comes on and off stage only once and finally disappears to the darkness of the wings, leaving the narrator to do his final colloquy with the King. This is odd: it is one of the few really ready-made dramatic exchanges in Malory.)

There are some good things, unquestionably. There is the gratuitous but delightful moment when "fayre lady Elayne" (Janis Ballin), "skypped onte of her bedde all naked". And there are consistently dignified performances by Bernard Archard, doubling as King Pelles and the Bysshop of Caunturbury.

Nor are the Knights of the Round Table in blame that the designer (or wardrobe mistress?) has taken "armed at ol poynte" to mean leather jock-straps and a few old rags from the Oxfam shop; that the Seige Perilous is an upturned tea-chest; or that the props man has failed to come up with a Round Table. These are things which could happen to any production when money is scarce.

The trouble remains that even the most brilliant actor cannot act a narrative. A reader can be told that Launcelot was "never matched of erthly knyghtes" and accept it quite readily. But how do you act it? David Suchet, as Launcelot, does not have the first idea, veering from a sort of standard RSC history-play manner to a lusty jaunty style which made the "curtest knyght that ever bare shield" seem more like a cheeky plumber, bouncing into my lady's chamber when he should have been mending the cistern.

The Arthurian story, of course, is infinitely adaptable, and you can get away with more or less anything when reinterpreting it. You might get away with a suburban seeming Guinevere (Maureen O'Brien). You might get away with a Sir Mordred (Philip Sully) who sounds like an understudy for Larry Grayson, or a Sir Garath (Peter Roberts) who looks as though he had just come from beating up Mods on the pier at Margate. But, surely, the history of literature in the last six hundred years has shown that the Arthurian matere can bear almost any quirky revision. But what you can't get away with is doing all this with the insouciant, confident and tone realizes anew by the end of the evening's brilliant voice of Malory in the background.

Repertory seasons: Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*, with Helen Mirren, Bob Hoskins and Mike Gwilym, has just opened at the Royal Exchange, Manchester. The Glasgow Citizens' autumn season includes *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, directed by Giles Havergal, and a new play by Robert David MacDonald, *Dom Juan*, opening on November 7. A season of one-man shows opens at the Bristol Old Vic this week, among them Frank Barrie's *Macready* and Michael Rodhwell's *The World of Lewis Carroll*.

Rochester tercentenary. A critical symposium on the poetry of John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester (1647-80) is being held at Wadham College, Oxford, on September 22 and 23. Contributors include Pat Rogers, Peter Porter, Barbara Everett and Ian Fletcher, and a number of other critics and Restoration specialists will be there to discuss such topics as "Rochester and Affairs of State" and "Rochester's 'Wanton Expressions'". There will be a tercentenary dinner, and accommodation is available: last-minute bookings should be made with the Steward, Wadham College, Oxford. (Tel. 0865-42564).

Colette s'en va

By David Lodge

Colette
Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham

Drama is a more mimetic form of art than narrative, but the activity which it finds hardest to represent is precisely the writing of prose fiction, which is essentially private, silent, solitary and slow. Tom Stoppard solved the problem brilliantly in *Travesties* by non-naturalistic means of parody and pastiche, and one approached *Colette*, "a story with music" by John Dankworth (new in London at the Comedy), hoping that this distinguished composer of jazz-based music, and his wife Cleo Laine, the finest singer we have outside grand opera, might have found some comparably bold solution in music and song. Alas, not only does *Colette* tell us nothing about her art, but it presents her fascinating life in a singularly limp fashion and the music, though pleasant enough, seems decorative rather than expressive in function.

The format of the show is reminiscent of *This Is Your Life*. A Narrator, played with understandable diffidence by John Moffatt, speaking sometimes to the audience and sometimes to Colette herself, communicates the basic facts about the writer's life in a style heavy with cliché ("the penny dropped", "a hive of industry", "killing two birds with one stone") and links together numerous short scenes between Colette and her three husbands, "Willy" Gauthier-Villars, Henri de Jouvenel and Maurice Goudeket, scenes which invariably provide a cue for a song.

The three male roles are all played by the same actor, Kenneth Nelson, who varies his voice and deportment with considerable virtuosity, though it seems to be asking too much of him (as well as destroying the point of the episode) to make him also impersonate "Missy", the Marquise de Belboeuf with whom Colette had a probably lesbian relationship in the early 1900s.

Cleo Laine herself, with her great mop of curls, has a certain resemblance to the mature Colette, and brings a convincing dignity and pathos to the portrayal of the writer in her old age, crippled with arthritis but still vital in spirit. As the young Colette (whose pensive, feline features are photographically imprinted on Tim Goodchild's neat and elegant set) she is less convincing. But she is hampered throughout by a poor script, which alleges that she is witty but gives her no witty lines to speak, asserts that she is a great writer but gives her not a single memorable line to speak—or to sing. One's heart sinks to hear a Colette rhyming "place of renown" with "wonderful town" in a song called "Paree".

Not all the songs are so bathetic, admittedly. Some of the slow ballads, such as "Alone with myself" and "Will he ever be back?" (sung after Maurice has been arrested during the Occupation) generate genuine emotion, though more by sound than sense, exploiting the husky yet vibrant timbre of Cleo Laine's voice. The up-tempo songs are cast in jaunty rhythms reminiscent of *My Fair Lady*, and only in snatches does a jazz beat make itself felt. Presumably the jazz idiom was thought to be culturally inappropriate. But the whole evening seems crippled by an excess of reverence, decorum and timidity towards its subject. The complex nature of Colette's sexuality, for instance, is only coyly glanced at. There is no suspense, no conflict, and no real comedy. As the show proceeds on its decent but dull course, one wonders what it is for. Even as a vehicle for Cleo Laine it does not allow her to demonstrate the full range of that thrilling voice. "Fancy having to remember all those words," a woman wondered aloud as we shuffled out. Indeed, the words were not very memorable, and that was basically the trouble.

Upstairs, downstairs

By Patricia Craig

Taking Steps
Lyric Theatre

In Alan Ayckbourn's last play, *Sisterly Feelings*, the characters were set to clambering, scrambling and plodding up and down the slopes of a grassy mound; and this effortful activity seems to have inspired the author's newest offering. Two crucial props in *Taking Steps* are imaginary staircases which are established so convincingly in the mind of the audience that they nearly forget to applaud when Roland Crabbe (Dinsdale Landen) falls down one (the most impressive stunt in the entire performance). The significance of the title soon becomes plain: the steps lead nowhere, the actors go round in circles and figures of eight, dodging one another with a fair amount of agility, each one popping round a corner or out of a doorway as another pops in. Embarrassment, as in the traditional Whitehall romp, is staved off for as long as possible in order to produce the maximum effect when it finally occurs.

There are other ways in which *Taking Steps* is old-fashioned (it is dedicated, appropriately enough, to Ben Travers). It contains plenty of references to brothels and prostitution—always good for a laugh; half the cast spends half its time in pyjamas, staggering about and falling over; an innocent young man is manoeuvred into two occupied beds, one after the other; a note is ambiguously worded to give the impression that someone has done himself in. Misunderstandings abound. People are for ever stumbling out of cupboards and getting caught between the sides of a folding bed. A couple of separately absconding ladies appear at intervals in the background, creeping about with suitcases.

One of these is Crabbe's wife [illegible] some ex-dancer perpetually dithering on the verge of departure, torn between the comforts of home and a fatuous notion of "freedom". Her confidant is her brother Mark (Paul Chapman), proprietor of a fishing shop, who defines fishing as "transcendental meditation with an end product". Mark has troubles of his own. He is a bore. (We know he's boring because his conversation puts everyone to sleep.) His fiancée Kitty (Wendy Murray) has run off, subsequently falling under suspicion of soliciting at Haverstock Hill ("By the garage, or further up?" asks Elizabeth, in an interested tone).

Elizabeth has finally decided to go on the very evening when Crabbe, a wealthy bucket manufacturer, is completing the negotiations to buy the house, which he has leased, from the ingratiating builder who owns it (Richard Kane). The firm of solicitors representing Crabbe has sent along a junior partner, Tristram Watson (Michael Maloney), an earnest fellow with an idiosyncratic speech defect: his sentences come out back to front. The most is made of this mannerism. Tristram is the standard inoffensive character to whom things happen. First he is left sitting in the dark; then he is deprived of speech altogether as he watches his client swallow tumbler after tumbler of neat Scotch (heavy drinking is another device guaranteed to get the audience going). Then, at the climax of the action, caught in bed with Elizabeth and asked to explain himself, Tristram asserts wildly that he is soliciting for Mr Crabbe—a *double entendre* that really is funny.

Ayckbourn's entertaining hokum requires an intricate structural pattern (like *The Norman Conquests*), or a special sharpness of social observation, if it is to be distinguished from trivial, routine comedy; and both these qualities are missing from *Taking Steps*. If anything could have saved the production from mediocrity it is Michael Maloney's Tristram; but one strong comic figure is not enough. In the end it is not only the characters who are going no-

to the editor

Plays in Translation

Sir,—Jeremy Treglown's self-effacing report (Commentary, September 12) of the recent play translation conference at the Riverside Studios gives our conclusions, but doesn't really deal with the conclusions to be drawn by others, notably in response to the raising of such problems as the following.

Are time and effort really saved by the practice of patching up one translation by unauthorized lifting from another, since any competent translator is only too glad to amend and improve his version if asked, and can do so without traducing the original?

Don't grants and guarantees sometimes positively encourage theatres to commission new translations rather than consider using existing modern ones, and might this encouragement not be transferred more specifically to the translation of plays not yet performed in English?

How often does the director of a given production get an additional fee under the heading of "translation" or "adaptation" for the kind of editorial and dramaturgical work which he would do as part of his job in the case of a new English play?

More marginally, the Riverside is fund-raising for its own rather desperate needs, not just in order to continue our discussions. And I apologize if I was rude to Gillian Hanna, but it's difficult to take these his/hers problems seriously when you deal with languages where kings, popes and ambassadors are feminine (*Majesté*, *Santità*, *Excellence*) and a woman (*Weib*, *Mädchen*) can be neuter.

JOHN WILLETT.
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Laura Riding

Sir,—No need for a long comment on Laura (Riding) Jackson's longish letter (September 12). My article of the 1960s was based on notes made soon after meeting Laura Riding, but of course interpretations may be inaccurate, or idiosyncratic—as they were when she said to me that I was not as tall as I had sounded on the telephone. If she says her hair was brown, eyes blue (dark blue?), lips not thin, well, she should know. I offer my apologies.

I must object, though, to the implications of such a phrase as "he indulges . . . in an identification of my father as a tailor". It is she who made the identification. In repeating it I did not "indulge" myself, merely repeated what she had said. And the suggestion, for which she offers no supporting fact, that a "problem of years" for me has been "how to assault [her] while compensating for this with some first-aid of credit-giving" to avoid showing "vulgar personal animus", will I hope seem wide of the truth to most readers of the article. I expressed admiration of Laura Riding's craft, distrust of the creed from which it sprung. It is a pity that she should feel able to comment on a seriously intended review of her achievement only in personal terms.

JULIAN SYMONS.
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Linguistics

Sir,—T. P. Waldron's reply (Letters, September 5) to Smith and Gazdar will no doubt be seen by many as merely a further act of self-condemnation on his part, but the combination of over-blown rhetoric and errant nonsense he so well displays needs a reply. Let me confine myself to three points.

Waldron's attempts to persuade us that Chomsky, Harris and Sampson "are what are known in the trade as Sociolinguists or Psycholinguists" are at best unconvincing, at worst absurd. Let us assume that I read the work of some sociolinguists and of some psycholinguists, further let us assume that I teach both subjects from time to time in tutorials and that some of what I write has clear connections with both subjects. This in no way constitutes proof that I am either a sociolinguist or a psycholinguist, yet in so far as Waldron offers any evidence that Chomsky, Harris and Sampson are such, this is all the evidence he offers, apart from his absurd offering from the fly-leaf of Harris's book (since when did the fly-leaf of any book offer reliable evidence about any subject whatsoever?). Furthermore, Waldron revealingly fails to see the force of his own phrase "what are known in the trade". Even allowing for the probability that his original use of the phrase was purely connotative, he completely fails to note that the phrase has a restrictive meaning which quite destroys the validity of his claim. Chomsky, Harris and Sampson may or may not (the question is uninteresting) "really" be Sociolinguists or Psycholinguists, but they are not what are known in the trade as such, and Waldron's claim that they are is only interesting in that he thereby reveals his ignorance of the trade.

Waldron claims that Smith and Gazdar offer "a rare glimpse of the Linguistics Association of Great Britain at work". Presumably this is intended as no more than another piece of rhetorical abuse. To my certain knowledge, Mr Waldron is not a member of the Association (for which he should not, of course, be castigated) and, as far as I know, he has never attended a meeting of the Association. How, then, does he know what the Linguistics Association at work looks like? Perhaps someone might like to instruct Waldron on the dangers of arguing from the particular to the general. Failing that, he is welcome to any meeting of the Association; such meetings being rather more open than he suggests. But he may prefer to arm himself with his [illegible] ignorance.

Waldron states that Smith and Gazdar's letter is "ungrammatical". Two questions arise here. Can he demonstrate this? Is the majority of his other claims to remain undemonstrated? Would it matter if the letter were ungrammatical?

Finally, could Waldron understand the force of the quotation immediately above? On the evidence so far, I doubt it.

RICHARD M. HOO
Department of English Language and Literature, The University, Manchester, Manchester M13

Alexandria

Sir,—Lawrence Durrell says he wrote a preface for an American paperback of E. M. Forster's Alexandrian Guide done "some ten or fifteen years ago" and that "no trace of this production can be found" (Letters, August 22).

We have before us a Doubleday Anchor Original published in New York in 1961: *Alexandria: A History and a Guide with a new introduction by the author*. In the introduction dated Cambridge 1960 E. M. Forster does indeed give Lawrence Durrell "a kindly passing mention" but the preface, certainly "very short", is by the author.

RONALD GRAY.
The Hammersmith Bookshop Ltd, Barnes High Street, London SW13.

Andrew Lang and the SPR

Sir,—The confusion as to when Andrew Lang joined the Society for Psychical Research stems from his own article in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1911) where he lists himself third among the early members. He is also mentioned elsewhere in the same edition as "one of the founders of the study of Psychical Research". Though he may not be included in the List of Members until 1904, as Mr Eric J. Dingwall points out (Letters, August 22), I find that he made at least twenty contributions to the publications of the Society between [illegible] and 1911.

ROGER LANCELYN GREEN.
Poulton Hall, Poulton-Lancelyn, Babington, Wirral, L63 9LN.

Among this week's contributors

NOEL ANNAN is Vice-Chancellor of the University of London. His books include *Leslie Stephen: his Thought and Character in Relation to his Time*, 1951.

PETER AVERY is the author of *Modern Iran*, 1965.

EDMUND BOSWORTH is the author of *The Later Ghaznavids: Splendour and Decay*, 1978.

L. D. BURNARD is a consultant at the Oxford University Computing Service.

RICHARD COMBS is the editor of *The Monthly Film Bulletin*, and a regular contributor to *Sight and Sound*.

JOHN CREASER is a Fellow of Mansfield College, Oxford. His edition of *Volpone* was published in 1978.

NICHOLAS DAVIES is a lecturer in Zoology at the University of Cambridge.

SIMON DIGBY is the author of *War Horse and Elephant in the Delhi Sultanate*, 1971.

MARY DOUGLAS is currently employed on research at the Russell Sage Foundation. Her study of Evans Pritchard in the Modern Masters series was published earlier this year.

GAVIN EWART's *The Collected Ewart* was published earlier this year.

KYRIL FITZLYON's most recent book is *Before the Revolution*, 1978.

KATE FLINT is a lecturer in English at the University of Bristol.

RICHARD FREEBORN's *Russian Literary Attitudes from Pushkin to Solzhenitsyn* was published earlier this year.

ROY FULLER's collections of poems include *From the Joke Shop*, 1975, and *An Ill-Governed Coast*, 1976.

ERNEST GELLNER's *Spectacles and Predicaments* was published earlier this year, and his *Muslim Society* will be published early in 1981.

VICTORIA GLENDINNING's biography of Edith Sitwell will be published later this year.

MARTIN HINDS is a Fellow of Trinity Hall, Cambridge.

DAVID LODGE's most recent novel, *How Far Can You Go?*, was published earlier this year.

MICHAEL MASON is a lecturer in English at University College London.

W. MONTGOMERY WATT's most recent book is *The Majesty that was Islam*, 1974.

KENNETH MELLANBY is the editor of the periodical *Environmental Pollution*. His *Farming and Wildlife* will be published in 1981.

WILFRID MELLERS's books include *Twilight of the Gods: the Beatles in Retrospect*, 1974.

ROBIN ROBBINS is a lecturer in English Literature at the University of Sheffield.

SALLY RAMSEY is a lecturer in Commonwealth Literature at the University of Leeds.

CAROL RUMENS's most recent collection of poems is *A Necklace of Mirrors*, 1979.

NICHOLAS SHRIMPTON is a Fellow of Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford.

JON SILKIN's most recent collection of poems, *Psalms with their Spoils*, was published earlier this year.

IGOR VINOGRADOFF edited the correspondence of the Emperors Alexander III and Nicholas II with Prince V. P. Meshchersky for the *Oxford Slavonic Papers* 1962 and 1964.

A. N. WILSON's most recent novel, *The Healing Art*, was published earlier this year.

CHRISTOPHER WINTLE is a lecturer in Music at Goldsmiths' College, University of London.

M. E. YAPP's *Strategies of British India: Britain, Iran and Afghanistan 1798-1850* will be reviewed shortly in the *TLS*.

Montague Summers

Sir,—All students of the byways of English Literature must be grateful to you for Timothy d'Arch Smith's comprehensive and authoritative memoir (September 12) of R. A. Caton, of the Fortune Press, with its fascinating glimpses of Caton's principal author, Montague Summers. Since I may in the past have muddied rather than clarified the matter, to which Mr d'Arch Smith alludes, of Summers's holy orders, may I now put the record straight?

Monsignor Ronald Knox, one of Summers's *bêtes noires*, and certainly no friend to him—both were alumni of Trinity College, Oxford—once told me that Summers was "certainly in orders". A little research has amply confirmed this.

Montague Summers was ordained deacon in 1908—for details see *Crockford's Clerical Directory* for 1909—and served a curacy under the late Canon H. N. Ellacombe in the Bristol suburb of Bitton. In 1909 he was received into the Roman Catholic Church, and pursued further ecclesiastical studies at St John's Seminary, Wonersh. A year or two later he was ordained deacon in the Latin rite. By his first (Anglican) diaconate he achieved the legal status of a clerk in holy orders, and was thus entitled to the style "Reverend".

When the time came, Summers's Roman Catholic ordinary, the Bishop of Clifton, felt unable to advance him to the priesthood; but he was able to obtain priestly ordination from the late Ulric Vernon Herford, sometime Bishop of Mercia and Middlesex in the Evangelical Catholic Communion which he himself had founded. (Mrs Herford invariably acted as Archdeacon at ordinations held at the pro-cathedral, a room in a bungalow in the Iffley Road, Oxford.)

The matter of the validity of Herford's own orders, derived from one Mar Basileus in South India, may be studied in Peter F. Anson's *Episcopi Vagantes*, and in George F. Tull's *Vernon Herford, Apostle of Unity*. Summers probably at some point began to have doubts about the Mar Basileus succession, and underwent a second ordination to the priesthood, possibly *sub conditione*, in Italy. His certificate of ordination, signed by a well-known Italian bishop, was seen by one of Summers's secretaries, who described it to me. Unfortunately the certificate, along with all Summers's private papers and literary remains, disappeared, under mysterious circumstances, shortly after his death in 1948.

Oddly, yet somehow typically, Summers's name continued to appear in *Crockford* up to 1925. From 1909, however, he was a member of the Roman Catholic Church. As an ecclesiastic, from 1912 or so onwards, he was a freelance, his name being on no Roman Catholic clergy list. In his own residences he always had a private oratory (unauthorized, unless, as he sometimes hinted, by direct papal approval), but he had no official clerical employment. On the Continent, however, he invariably said Mass in public churches; when in Venice in the church of S Maria della Salute, of which he was especially fond. For a short time in the early 1930s, when living at Hove, he officiated as chaplain to the Hon Mrs Ermyntrude Greville-Nugent, a Roman Catholic lady of strong Jacobite views, who had a licensed private oratory in her house; but when the then Latin-rite Bishop of Southwark, Dr Peter Amigo, learnt of this he threatened to place the oratory under an interdict unless these uncanonical ministrations ceased. Mrs Greville-Nugent never lost faith in her erstwhile chaplain, whom she looked upon as having been greatly wronged by the bishop.

In short, Montague Summers was quite certainly in holy orders. His Latin-rite ordination to the priesthood may possibly have been canonically irregular, as his ordination by Vernon Herford certainly was; but it was entirely valid.

BROCARD SEWELL.
Whitefriars School, Charlton Kings, Cheltenham.

'Adultery in the Novel'

Sir,—David Lodge, reviewing Tony Tanner's *Adultery in the Novel* (September 5) speaks of "deconstructive criticism" as that which "aims to make the gaps and absences of a text speak as eloquently as what is verbally present". The danger is that the gaps become infinitely large, Black Holes as it were, not those circumscribed by the object and its maker, like M Binet's napkin rings in *Madame Bovary*. It is, of course, Tanner himself who defines a napkin ring as a "material encirclement of nothing . . ., a manufactured hole", and who sees a similarity "in sound and shape" between the word *tour* which can mean a "turn" as well as Binet's "lathe", and "the word *trou*, hole, which is what Binet makes in the form of napkin rings". Various assumptions and presumptions are contained in this proposition (eg that *trou* is the word for that special kind of hole; that holes are what Binet is making; that the word "hole" is part of the definition of a napkin ring, synonymous with "nothing") and not the least questionable of these is his notion of their similarity in sound and shape, the fact that from *trou* to *tour* requires the "most minimal lexical displacement". By *lexical*, one must suppose he means *phonemic*, for otherwise the statement makes little sense: there is a world of difference between the lexical fields of words to do with holes and lathes/turns. But while *trou* and *tour* do provide satisfactory phonemic oppositions, so also do the pairs *trou* and *outre* (as noun: "water-skin"; as preposition: "beyond"); and *trou* and *route* ("road", etc). If, as Tanner says, there is to be "no *difference*" between holes and lathes, then there must be no difference between *glues* and *ghouls*, *sties* and *sites*.

KATHLEEN WALES.
Department of English, Royal Holloway College, University of London.

Sir,—Throughout his review of Tony Tanner's *Adultery in the Novel* (September 5), David Lodge gives the name of "St Preux" to one of the main characters in Rousseau's *Julie ou La Nouvelle Héloïse*. But it is not, in fact, his name. Rousseau made clear both in the text of his novel, and in three of the "editor's footnotes", that "Saint Preux" was "un nom controuvé", a nickname given to the tutor by Julie and Claire during one of their games of chivalry. In the latter parts of the novel, this nickname acquires increasingly ironic connotations—since the tutor's behaviour could scarcely be described as either saintly or virtuous. Tony Tanner seems to think that the Baron d'Etange is doing something which is deeply significant when he refuses to refer to the tutor by the name of "Saint Preux": since it is not his name, I fail to see the significance. Only at one point in the story (the *billet* enclosed with letter xi, Part III) does Rousseau give away the tutor's real name—or rather his initials "S.G.". Clearly, it was important to the novelist that the tutor's identity should be a mystery.

CHRISTOPHER FRAYLING.
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A Problem in Gibbon

Sir,—I was puzzled by a sentence in Lord Dacre of Glanton's Valedictory Lecture, "History and Imagination" (July 25). "'What a moment in the annals of science' was the preservation, by Alexander, of the Babylonian astronomical records, and their communication, at the request of Aristotle, to the astronomer Hipparchus!" Since Alexander and Aristotle lived in the fourth century BC and the recorded observations of Hipparchus were made in the second century BC, the "moment" would have been a long one.

Lord Dacre has in mind Chapter 50 note 59 of *The Decline and Fall* (5.331, edited by J. B. Bury); the chronological error originates with Gibbon, not with his Lordship. To support his statement "From the observations of two thousand years the priests and astronomers of Babylon deduced the eternal laws of nature and providence", Gibbon refers to the commentary by Simplicius on Aristotle's *De Coelo*. The note concludes with the words: "The earliest date of the Chaldean observations is the year 2234 before Christ. After the conquest of Babylon by Alexander, they were communicated, at the request of Aristotle, to the astronomer Hipparchus. What a moment in the annals of science!" Simplicius (who followed Porphyry) in fact said that Callisthenes sent details of Babylonian observations to Greece at the request of Aristotle. The Greek text will be found most readily at Callisthenes 124 T3 in Felix Jacoby, *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* Volume II B (Berlin 1927) page 632. Gibbon, noting that Simplicius quoted Porphyry, refers to Marsham, *Canon. Chron.* page 474. I have not been able to verify the reference. Porphyry's tale has been doubted: see O. Neugebauer, *A History of Ancient Mathematical Astronomy* Part 2 (Berlin, Heidelberg and New York, 1975) page 608.

GEORGE HUXLEY.
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Writers' Ink

Sir,—I recently handled a large batch of more or less new poems in manuscript, specially written out, as a birthday present, by sixty or so living English poets, all of whose names would be known to the collective *TLS* readership. It was striking how much of this friendly calligraphy was in ball-point ink or the tinted acid of a felt-tip. One even seemed to be the work of one of those stubby marker-pens that have a nib the size of a sugar-lump.

In my experience both these broad types of ink are unstable and fade rapidly if exposed much to light. This is worrying, and the worry seems worth communicating to an audience which includes many writers and keepers of manuscripts. Perhaps some of your readers have better evidence than my mere observation, and can authoritatively advise writers to use old-fashioned ink, especially for anything that may one day be sold. Institutions are not going to be pleased to have bought manuscripts written in the reverse of invisible ink, which cannot safely be exhibited or perhaps even read.

ALISTAIR ELLIOT
University Library, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 7RU.

'The Spectator'

Sir,—*The Spectator* came out six times a week, except for the last series, which came out three times a week. I am sorry if I misled your readers by stating that the whole series came out "three times a week".

This is the only "error of fact" that Edward and Lillian Bloom specify in their eleven-inch letter (September 5). I am more than happy to admit that I am biased against Addison's character.

I did not acknowledge my sources because it is not usual to supply detailed sources in *TLS* reviews.

KEITH WALKER.
Department of English, University College London, Gower Street, London WC1.

A. C. Benson's Diaries

Sir,—In his handsome review (September 5) of David Newsome's biography of A. C. Benson, *On the Edge of Paradise*, Alan Bell mentions our announcement of a selection from the early years of Benson's diary for publication this autumn. In fact we are having to postpone *Edwardian Excursions* until spring next year.

ROGER HUDSON.
John Murray Ltd, 50 Albemarle Street, London W1X 4BD.

Pasternak and Yuri Krotkov

Sir,—We wish to state that our translation of "Hamlet" by Pasternak, taken from *Dr Zhivago*, has been used in Hamish Hamilton's publication of the novel *The Nobel Prize* by Yuri Krotkov, without permission or acknowledgment. This is the more regrettable since, had we been asked permission, we should certainly have refused it, because we would not wish to be in any way associated with this book.

MARJORIE VILLIERS.
Harvill Press Ltd, 30a Pavilion Road, London SW1X 0HJ.

Author, Author

Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than Friday, October 10. A prize of £10 is offered for the first correct set of answers to be opened, or failing that the most nearly correct—in which case inspired guesswork will also be taken into consideration.

Entries should be addressed to the Editor, *The Times Literary Supplement*, PO Box 7, New Printing House Square, Gray's Inn Road, London WC1X 8EZ, and marked "Author, Author" on the envelope. The solution and result will appear in our issue of October 17.

Competition No. 37

1 Minott, Lee, Willard, Hosmer, Meriam, Flint
Possessed the land which rendered to their toil
Hay, corn, roots, hemp, flax, apples, wool, and wood.

2 Pilbeam — Kenerdington — Penerdington — Ardington — Lfodock — Sturch — Morrison-Morgan — Mallow — Newsome — Ludovick — Bream — Brench — Denshec — Ilcombe — Donnerd — Cemberbridge — Merl (or place) — Norrington — Froy (or piece) — Trumpar — Husk — Vintry — Dunrose — Milrose — Croy — Match — Midmore.

3 Funny names are my hobby. I collect them the way other people collect coins or stamps. Some I take from real life, some I make up—the former of course the wildly more improbable. Ima Nutt, for example, I saw with my own eyes on the window of a hairdresser's while passing through Kansas on a train. It is entered in a section of my collection devoted to Paronomastic Names that form phrases or thoughts: Justin Case, Miles Long, Brighton Early, Curt Manner, O. B. Still and the like (to which could now be added R. U. Upjohn for that matter). It was I who first coined the name Herbie Hind, now, of course, part of American folklore.

Competition No. 34
Winner: Alan Brownjohn, 2 Belsize Park, London NW3.
Answers:

1 In dance the polka hit our wish,
Gentlemen,
The paced quadrille, the spry schottische,
"Sir Roger."—And in opera spheres
The "Girl" (the famed "Bohemian"),
And "Trovatore," held the ears,
Gentlemen.
—Thomas Hardy, "An Ancient to Ancients"

2 Peacock, a feather, there, found together, grounded, to bearer share turned for dancing, among them peacock a feather feather, dancing and to declare for turning, turning a feather as it were for dancing, turning for dancing, dancing being begun turning together, together to be become, barely a feather being, beware, being a peacock only on the stair, staring at, only a peacock to be coming, fairly becoming for a peacock, be fair together being around in air, peacock to be becoming lastly, peacock around to be become together, peacock a very peacock to be there.
—William Empson, "Poem about a Ball in the Nineteenth Century"

3 Q 's a Quadrille, put instead of the Lancers:
R 's the Remonstrances made by the dancers:
S is the Supper, where all went in pairs:
T is the Twaddle they talked on the stairs:
U is the Uncle who "thought we'd be goin':"
V is the Voice which his niece replied "No" in:
W is the Waiter, who sat up till eight:
X is his Exit, not rigidly straight:
Y is a Yawning fit caused by the Ball:
Z stands for Zero, or nothing at all.
—C. S. Calverley, "ABC"

New and recent books on Islam

By M. E. Yapp

KHURSHID AHMAD (Editor) : Islam Its Meaning and Message
279pp.
0 86037 002 X

Muslim Communities in non-Muslim States
169pp.
0 907163 01 7

ALTAF GAUHAR (Editor) : The Challenge of Islam
426pp.
0 906041 02 3

The Muslim World and the Future Economic Order
383p.
Islamic Council of Europe

The Islamic Council of Europe was founded in May 1973 with the object of coordinating the promotion of Islamic activities in Europe and particularly of explaining Islam to the West. It is not to be expected, therefore, that its publications would dwell on what, in modern jargon, are termed the negative elements of Islam; rather than they would extol the virtues of that religion. Reading these publications one is impressed by the (in Muslim terms) strongly optimistic assumptions which run through them: that Western civilization has failed to find an answer to the problems of the modern world; that communism offers no reasonable alternative; and that the way is clear for the reception of the universal message of Islam.

Islam: Its Meaning and Message is a selection from the writings of some eminent contemporary Muslim scholars. It was first published in 1974 and in the second edition some errors have been removed. It is divided into four parts, dealing with the Islamic outlook on life, Muhammad and the Qur'an, Islamic institutions, and Muslim history. It provides a convenient introduction to several strands in recent Muslim thinking.

Muslim Communities in non-Muslim States examines the problems of the third of all Muslims who live under non-Muslim governments. Most of the writers of the papers contained in it are preoccupied with general considerations and the treatment of specific countries is brief. Attention is drawn to the possibilities of the assimilation of Muslims and a programme of action to avoid this eventuality is sketched out, including the preservation of Muslim Personal Law and the control of the education of Muslim children.

The Challenge of Islam is a selection of the papers presented at an international Muslim conference organized by the Islamic Council in 1976. The papers are arranged in three sections dealing with the faith of Muslims, law and institutions, and the "Challenge of Islam" that is, those Islamic ideals which are perceived to present better goals for the world than those which prevail, especially in the West. The book is not suitable for those with no knowledge of Islam as the writers presume that their readers are acquainted with many aspects of the religion.

The Muslim World and the Future Economic Order is the product of another International conference, held in London in 1977. The papers are divided into three parts: the Perspective, in which broad problems are considered; Islam and the new world economic order, which includes a substantial paper by Altaf Gauhar; and the Muslim world, the largest and most interesting section, which contains papers on economic developments, industrialization, agriculture, oil, trade and banking. The lecture form in which the papers were originally delivered is retained; revision would have produced a more readable book.

There is, however, some instructive discussion of the problems of relating Islam to the complexities of the modern economy, notably in determining what should be the role of the state, given the existence of Muslim rules on taxation and private property, and in deciding what should be the function of the banking system, given the Islamic prohibition on interest. The development of Islamic economic links through trade preferences and capital investment is also considered. In the light of the determined efforts by some Muslim countries to give a larger place to Islam in their public life this section is worthy of attention.

The three major criticisms of these four books are that they deal too much with the ideal world of Islam, that they are too preoccupied with theoretical discussion and give insufficient attention to ascertaining the facts in particular situations, and that they grapple too often with a distorted version of Western society rather than with the reality. Western bogeymen may frighten Muslims but they are unlikely to appear convincing to Westerners. Having said that one should also say that these four books do provide helpful insights into the ingenuity and energy with which Muslims approach the possibilities of their situation and their relations with the world.

NEHEMIA LEVITZION (Editor) : Conversion to Islam
272pp. Holmes and Meier. £14.95.
0 8419 0343 3

This volume is the outcome of a seminar held at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, in 1972-73. The subject is the way in which Islam has spread since its first appearance in seventh-century Arabia. There are twelve essays concerned with particular areas—one each on Arabia, Iran, Anatolia, the Indian subcontinent and China, two on maritime South East Asia and four on Africa. Some important areas are omitted—North Africa, Spain, the Balkans, Central Asia and mainland South East Asia—and the essays are too diverse in their approach to the subject to enable direct comparisons to be easily made.

Nevertheless many interesting points appear in the papers and some of these are considered by the editor in his introduction. Levitzion surveys the source materials, considers the agents of Islamic expansion—nomads, rulers and government officials, traders and sufis; and comments on the fortunes of the converted. The papers confirm that forcible conversion was rare and that the temptations presented by the possibility of sharing in Muslim political powers or culture or simply enjoying the material benefits of Muslim status were a much more influential factor in decisions to convert. The principal distinction which emerges is that between conversion which followed the extension of Muslim political authority by conquest and conversions in areas where no element of formal coercion was present; in the latter areas the trader and the sufi come into their own. The helpful bibliography will facilitate further study of the topic.

CARTER V. FINDLEY : Bureaucratic Reform in the Ottoman Empire The Sublime Porte 1789-1922
488pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press. £13.90.
0 691 05288 3

The nineteenth-century Ottoman reform movement was directed by the central government. In this valuable scholarly study Carter V. Findley describes and analyses the development of the chief agency of the reform movement, the civil bureaucracy. In the first part of the book he examines the broad lines of the development of the bureaucracy prior to the new reforms of Selim III and in the latter part discusses the nineteenth-century changes in detail. He argues that the main feature was the rise of one section of the old bureaucratic system—the scribal service—to a position in which it was the dominant element in the new civil bureaucracy. He sees this as an evolutionary process in response to the demands of modernization and one which combined elements of traditional Islamic or Ottoman forms with Western models. The mid-nineteenth century he regards as the high point of the influence of the civil bureaucracy; during the last quarter of that century there was a reversion to the authoritarian government of the Sultan (although associated with further important reforms in the civil service) under Abdülhamid II.

In the early twentieth century the rise of the Young Turks saw the beginnings of an attempt to adapt the bureaucracy to meet the needs of a wider political system that included parliaments and political parties. Nevertheless, the old style bureaucrats continued to dominate the administration until the end of the Empire; only with the appointment of Talat in 1917 could one say that the office of Grand Vizir had become a political appointment. Professor Findley's conclusions tend to endorse the views which scholars had formed of this process; the strength of his book lies in the patient documentation of these changes. His work is based on a wide range of sources including Western and Ottoman archival sources and it includes a comprehensive bibliography.

MOHAMMED ALMANA : Arabia Unified A Portrait of Ibn Saud
328pp. Hutchinson. £6.95 (paperback, £3.95).
0 09 01-1610 3

From 1926 until 1935 the author served as translator to the court of King Abd al-Aziz Ibn Sa'ud, the founder of the modern kingdom of Saudi Arabia. In this biography of Abd al-Aziz he has sensibly given the greatest prominence to the years of which he had a peculiarly intimate knowledge. There are useful accounts of Ibn Sa'ud's relations with the Ikhwan and with Yemen, some comments on the early development of the oil industry, and a valuable description of the organization of the Court.

There are also some observations on individuals including the influential Finance Minister Shaikh Abdullah Suleiman and St John Philby. Mohammed Almana came to Arabia from British India, full of nationalist views and extremely hostile to Britain. One would have thought this might have endeared him to Philby but seemingly it did not. However, Philby is almost the only personality about whom the author appears to have had reservations; others are described in terms which are just too good to be true. Even men his Arabian contemporaries may have been but wretches they were not and the rosy limn which suffuse Almana's portrait of Abd al-Aziz and Saudi Arabia inevitably reduce the value of his book. In fairness one should mention that the book is the product of the author's memories forty years after the events.

MARILYN ROBINSON WALDMAN : Toward a Theory of Historical Narrative A Case Study in Perso-Islamicate Historiography
214pp. Columbus: Ohio State University Press.
0 8142 0297 7

Although it is now twenty years since the appearance of that pioneering volume, *Historians of the Middle East* (edited by B. Lewis and P. M. Holt), the art of Muslim history writing remains a comparatively unstudied subject. The present examination of the work of the Ghaznevid historian, Abu'l Fazl-i Bayhaqi (c 966-1077) forms a significant new contribution. The core of the book is an analysis of Bayhaqi's history of the Ghaznevids, a work planned to be completed in thirty volumes but of which only just over four volumes, containing some seven hundred pages dealing with the reign of Mas'ud (1030-41), survive. Marilyn Waldman, whose employment of that useful but unattractive term "Islamicate" to describe matters appertaining to rather than deriving from Islam betrays her as a disciple of the late Marshall Hodgson, analyses in detail both the content and the style of the work and compares it with other Muslim historical writings.

In a rather more controversial section she attempts to develop a new method for the analysis of Muslim historical works, claiming, with some justice, that most scholars have preferred to regard such chronicles as mere mines of historical information rather than as histories in their own right. Her choice of Speech Act Theory derived from the work of Janice Pratt, in which the book is seen as a verbal display, seems like taking a hammer to a butterfly.

R. C. BLOOMFIELD (Editor) : Middle East Studies and Libraries A Festschrift Volume for Professor J. D. Pearson
230pp. Mansell. £21.50.
0 7201 1512 4

In 1979 J. D. Pearson, the doyen of librarian, bibliographer and scholar, retired from the Chair of Bibliography with reference to the Near and Africa in the University of London. Before his elevation to that chair he had been for over twenty years Librarian of the School of Oriental and African Studies, during his career he has played a major part in the development of Middle East librarianship, both in the United Kingdom and outside it, in the preparation of bibliographies. That invaluable scholarly aid, *Index Islamicus*, a listing of periodical articles relating to the Muslim world, is only one of the many works for which he has been responsible.

This volume of essays by his friends and colleagues marks the esteem in which he is held. Its their range and variety the essays indicate the breadth of his interests. There are pieces on libraries, including those at SOAS and Durham, on bibliography, and on scholarly subjects. Appropriately enough, in the light of Professor Pearson's own deserved reputation as a *bon vivant*, they include an essay by Edward Ullendorff on Ethiopian good food guides.

DR AHMAD SHAFAAT : The Gospel according to Islam
90pp. New York: Vantage Press. $6.95.
0 533 04142 2

In the Qur'an there are ninety-three verses which relate to Jesus. Ahmad Shafaat has extracted these verses and presents them here accompanied by extensive notes drawn from the Christian Gospels. As an important element in his view which Muslims have of Christianity these verses are worth studying. To offer them as a new Gospel, a Muslim alternative to the existing four accounts of the life of Jesus, as the author does betokens a lack of understanding of the contribution of Christianity to Islam and of Christianity itself.

JACQUES BERQUE : L'islam au défi
311pp. Paris: Gallimard.

This discursive book by one of the foremost and most controversial French writers on Islam contains a series of reflections on the position of Muslim society. It is divided into three sections. In the first ("Présences") Berque recalls his own life-long experience with Islam from his childhood in Algeria onwards, comments on the work of other Orientalists, reflects on Muslim history and geography, and poses the main problems with which he is concerned—how change may be legitimized in a system which is unchanging, and the conflict of Modernist and Traditionalist. In the second section ("Retours") Berque looks at some of the sources of Islam—at the career and significance of the Prophet and at the message of the Qur'an. In the third section ("Projections") he examines the current debate within Islam and in his final judgment confesses that he sees Islam as an essentially universal system incapable upon rejuvenating a tired world.

Berque's book has all the features which one has come to associate with him: the prose, superficially clear and exciting which on examination is revealed to contain many mysteries; the idiosyncratic opinions; and the breadth of reading and experience which enables him to give freshness to old controversies by citing unfamiliar sources and asserting, over and illuminating parallels.

Talking with Tamerlane

By Ernest Gellner

IBN KHALDUN : Le Voyage d'Occident et d'Orient
Traduit de l'arabe et présenté par Abdesselam Cheddadi
331pp. Paris: Sindbad.

Ibn Khaldun is perhaps the greatest sociologist who ever lived; certainly he was the greatest of his age, and the acutest analyst there has been of Muslim society. This being so, it is astonishing that no translation of his autobiography should be available, which would make it accessible to Western readers, other than the incomplete and virtually unobtainable one by Baron William MacGuckin de Slane, published in 1844. Thus Abdessalam Cheddadi, a young Moroccan scholar working in Paris, is to be congratulated on this elegant, readable and highly usable French translation and presentation of Ibn Khaldun's *apologia pro vita sua*.

Cheddadi does not merely retranslate Ibn Khaldun's account of his own life and set it in context; his interesting introduction also criticizes the Western appreciation of Ibn Khaldun, which Cheddadi suspects of being patronizing. In one of his footnotes, he quotes Arnold Toynbee's adulation of Ibn Khaldun's work as "a philosophy of history which is undoubtedly the greatest work of its kind which has ever been created by any mind in any time or place . . ." but which "shines the more brightly by contrast with the foil of darkness against which it flashes out". Clearly, Cheddadi feels that Toynbee's admiration for Ibn Khaldun (to my mind fully justified) is used simultaneously to denigrate his nation, his tradition and his age.

There are various themes in this supposedly back-handed occidental admiration of Ibn Khaldun which Cheddadi singles out: he is accused of being ambitious, an opportunist, a political intriguer, even a Condottiere; of writing an autobiography which tells us little of the inner man, but a great deal of the political history of his time; of highlighting by his genius the mediocrity of his time; and above all, of documenting in his analysis the stagnation or stability of the social order which he knew and in which he was an active participant, at the very moment when the Renaissance was beginning the transformation of Europe, a possibility which Ibn Khaldun did not suspect.

One can sympathize with Cheddadi's irritation at this presumed condescension, and yet feel that his implicit repudiation of the conventional Western assessment of Ibn Khaldun is misguided. Having read his excellent translation, I find that all in all it confirms and indeed reinforces the old interpretation of Ibn Khaldun. One's admiration remains as great as ever, and this is not a snide, surreptitious means of denigrating anyone else. Ibn Khaldun did indeed observe and interpret a world which, in its general features, he considered stable (or stagnant, whichever one prefers). Most societies have been fairly stable and if we restrict the term revolution to profound and irreversible social transformations, I suspect that only two such have ever occurred: the neolithic and the industrial). Giambattista Vico also stood out against an age which lacked brilliance and was stagnant (post Counter-Reformation southern Europe was surely the equal of the Maghrib in stagnation/stability, and was also due similarly to be awakened much later by a nationalist revival); era we not to be allowed to say so without being accused of anti-Italian prejudice?

In the world which Ibn Khaldun knew and understood, significant political change was brought about only by tribal cohesion (there being no other kind). Hence, as he observed to Tamerlane, the world was destined to be ruled alternately by Arabs and by Turks (which includes Tartars), who were numerous and had cohesion. Notwithstanding Alexander and Caesar, he eagerly added, warming to his theme in the exposition of his *welthistorische Betrachtungen* to the Mongol warlord, who would compare the Europeans to the Turks? The idea was laughable.

Within the lucidly stated and valid premisses which set the political rules of the game in the world he knew, the argument was perfectly valid, and one's opinion of Ibn Khaldun would be in no way enhanced if he had been less clear about it. As for the other customary observations about him, they seem to me confirmed but irrelevant. He did not bare his intimate self in his autobiography, and if he suffered inner torments, which I doubt, he did not bother to tell us about them.

Similarly, it seems to be the case that Ibn Khaldun's historical narrative is sometimes elliptical and ran on occasion only be made coherent by filling in the premisses which he omits, in that naiva style characteristic of the age. It also seems to me true that while he was a superbly critical and rational observer of society and politics, his critical spirit did not carry over into other spheres, to which he appears to have been simply a man of his time. It always puzzles me to see how much Ibn Khaldun's scholarship is directed to areas in which he was merely as other men are, rather than to those in which he was unrivalled and unique. Finally, why should we hold it against him that his conduct as a politician was similar to that of other politicians of his time? Above all, why should we wish to pretend otherwise, in defiance of the evidence he himself provides with such admirable candour?

From the viewpoint of the general reader, there is no doubt but that the most interesting part of the autobiography is that which deals with Ibn Khaldun's encounters and conversations with Tamerlane—when the greatest scholar and the greatest conqueror of the age met face to face.

Towards the end of the year 1400, Ibn Khaldun found himself in Damascus in the train of Sultan Faraj, while Tamerlane's army was encamped nearby. Early in 1401, the Sultan and his immediate entourage, not including Ibn Khaldun, fled to Egypt, on the ostensive grounds that an insurrection was being prepared there and had to be thwarted. The notables of the city were left to negotiate what terms they could with the Tartars. The fame of the North African scholar had evidently reached the great Mongol, who asked to meet Ibn Khaldun; and this was arranged.

Ibn Khaldun makes no bones about the fear he felt—reasonably enough—nor about the fact that he promptly set himself to excogitate what flattering words about Tamerlane's life and rule might best secure his good-will. The reasons he offered Tamerlane as evidence for his great destiny were a curious mélanga of sociology and astrology: there is nothing here to suggest that Ibn Khaldun had any doubts on either score. But the good-will which he evidently secured from the great conqueror was probably not due to the eloquence of his flattery. From Ibn Khaldun's own account, it seems perfectly evident what Tamerlane wanted: a good, reliable intelligence report about the Maghrib, and in writing Ibn Khaldun had not the slightest compunction about providing this and Tamerlane's secretary translated the report, which took Ibn Khaldun some days to write, into Mongol.

As it happens Tamerlane did not come to use it; he did not even invade Egypt, let alone the Maghrib, and thus the Arabs and Field-Marshal Montgomery remain the only people to have effected a land conquest of Africa from the East. But Ibn Khaldun claims to have contradicted Tamerlane on a point of geneology, concerning a Mesopotamian personage to whom he said he was connected by marriage. This daring act of intellectual defiance might have ended ill for him, but Tamerlane's attention was distracted by news of the final surrender of the city. While Ibn Khaldun took time off to prepare his intelligence report on the Maghrib, Tamerlane expropriated the citizens of Damascus and eventually handed the city over to pillage. Women were carried off and what was left was set alight. The Grand Mosque itself was burnt, the fire reached its roof and the molten lead ran down. The horror of the spectacle was extreme, Ibn Khaldun noted, looking up from drafting his report for Tamerlane, and he adds that the course of events is in the hands of God, who acts towards His creatures and governs His kingdom as He pleases.

There was a curious sequel. Ibn Khaldun evidently did his best to secure mercy for the clerical and administrative staff of the Sultan who had fallen into Tamerlane's power. The Great Khan, on the other hand, had a curious caprice: he announced to Ibn Khaldun that he wanted to buy his beautiful mule. But who am I to do business with a man like you, Sire? Ibn Khaldun exclaimed, as well he might. The episode is unique; as far as I know there is no record of any commercial transaction between Aristotle and Alexander, or between Hegel and Napoleon. Tamerlane naturally had his way, and Ibn Khaldun never saw his mule again, as he wryly observes. But after various adventures on his way back to Egypt, which included being robbed and stripped naked by bedouin, he did receive a sum of money from Tamerlane in payment.

Ibn Khaldun praised God for his deliverance, and promptly sat down to write for the ruler of the Maghrib a really excellent intelligence report on the Mongols, to which he notes their similarity to the bedouin and the fact that Tamerlane attains his ends by intelligence and intellectual curiosity, not by magic (as rumour had it). Hero at least there was a statesman who knew how to make good use of intellectuals. He reports the fact that he saw Tamerlane daily for thirty-five days and that he secured a pardon (which proved ineffectual in the end) for the inhabitants of Damascus; and he also re-tells the story of the mule. He forgets to mention the fact that he had just supplied Tamerlane with a presumably just as brilliant, not rather longer, intelligence report on the Maghrib. Dare one hope that the library of some Mongolian January still contains that Mongolian translation of Ibn Khaldun's report?

Revolution in the Round City

By Edmund Bosworth

JACOB LASSNER :
The Shaping of Abbasid Rule
350pp. Princeton University Press. £13.90.
0 691 05281 6

So much less is known about almost the whole expanse of Islamic history, compared with Classical and European history, that orthodoxies of interpretation have not on the whole been able to secure in Islamic studies the formerly entrenched positions of, say, the Whig interpretation of post-1689 British history or the "frontier interpretation" of post-1783 American history. Even so, one of the cataclysms of early Islamic history, the revolutionary movement of 746-50 an which bloodily terminated the Umayyad dynasty of caliphs and substituted for them another Arab, distantly-related family, the Abbasids, did have its received interpretation for many decades.

Briefly, the change was viewed, under the influence of nineteenth-century nationalisms and the role of ethnic tensions in the dissolution of multi-national empires and confederations into separate states, as the transition from a caliphate directed by a wholly Arab, tribally-organized, military aristocracy to a much broader-based state, autocratic in ethos but redeemed by a sharing of power between Arabs and the client peoples, above all the Persians. The new regime could thus be characterized as an eastwards-facing one, especially since its capital was now moved from Levantine Syria to Baghdad, and could be regarded as approximating more and more to the classic oriental despotisms delineated for us by the sinologist Karl Wittfogel.

Revisionism has been at work here, as elsewhere, for some time, and the Abbasid revolutionary movement is now seen as essentially an inter-Arab upheaval which admittedly burst out in Persia, but among its Arab settlers (assimilated in varying degrees to the indigenous Persian population) who provided the necessary military backing for the conspirators of the Abbasid family.

Jacob Lassner stands within these recent attitudes, whose validity now seems, in the light of new Arabic sources which have come to light in the past two decades, incontrovertible, although he is well aware of the need for nuances. Already well known for his researches on the topography of medieval Baghdad, he now presents a series of connected studies of the formative period for the new regime, the caliphates of al-Saffah and al-Mansur (749-75) together with further investigations of the origins and planning of the Round City of Baghdad, incidentally dismissing firmly the incubrations of certain art historians concerning the cosmic significance of its layout.

With a sure mastery of the highly detailed, but often ambiguous and allusive Arabic sources, he examines such questions as, how al-Mansur managed to succeed his father in 754 when he had paternal uncles (the *'ammah*) and a cousin far more militarily experienced than himself and equipped with their own forces (an intriguing discussion here on the haghiographical and pseudo-prophetic literature which later grew up to justify al-Mansur's success); the delicate balance in the new administration between the old guard of revolutionaries (the Traitsky, in the analogy Lassner rightly makes), the numerous members of the Abbasid family eager for provincial governorships, and the "new men", who eventually become the ministers of the regime and its military system and who, with their Persian or Central Asian backgrounds, were largely responsible for the older view that the Abbasid caliphate was a reconstitution of older, pre-Islamic Iranian world-empires; and the precise nature of the Khurasanian guards who became the caliphs' praetorians. The author is not afraid to enter the lists on the vexed question of the juridical status and the ethnic backgrounds of these *mawali* or "new men", one which has recently much exercised specialists and which is in part the subject of Patricia Crone's *Slaves on Horses*.

In all these questions Lassner's approach is judicious, carefully documented; his conclusions are usually solid and, as a book is an instance of the meticulous examination of a history of a small span of civilization can provide a foundation for interpretation of events spanning subsequent centuries when, as he notes at the first centenary of Abbasid rule, "The fallen Umayyad ruling family to keep its hold on order, the propensity of the masses to stimulate rather than moderate revolutions, and, about all, the decline of professionalism within the Arab army all signalled the inevitable decline of 'Abbasid rule".

Such subject-matter does not scope for literary elegance, but style is pleasing and clear. A minor criticism may be made of Ch Pellat's monograph on the *Muqaffa'*, "*conseiller*" du *Calife* (Paris 1976) would have helped analysis of the *Risala fi l'Sahaba* al-Fath b Khaqan cannot have been connected with al-Ma'mun's death nearly two centuries later and Marwan II was not a member of the Sufyanid branch of the Umayyad dynasty, but an anti-Marwanid, grandson of the last Marwan I himself.

What Richard Bulliet seeks to elucidate in *Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period* is the pattern of conversion to Islam and the consequences of the increasing rise of the Muslim community relative to the non-Muslim community in each of the main areas of what was by then the Islamic world. The focus is on "social conversion", i.e. conversion to a social identity (unnecessarily defined, and not on formal conversion (there being in any case no equivalent of a baptismal rite or dependence on a priestly individual). One major underlying concern is the input of converts into the social institutions of the Islam to which they had converted. And the work as a whole "attempts to tie together the histories of parts of the medieval Islamic world that are more commonly treated as discrete entities by means of a number of quite speculative hypotheses based upon and inspired by a close examination of certain quantifiable aspects of medieval Arabic sources".

These quantifiable aspects are to be found in the bulky genre of the Muslim biographical dictionary. Many such dictionaries are extant, with a total number of entries conservatively estimated in the order of one million; the total number of individuals represented by these entries is a matter of guesswork at the moment but can hardly be less than about 25,000. For example, the biographical *History of Baghdad* by the eleventh-century scholar al-Khatib al-Baghdadi contains nearly 8,000 entries, while there are about 10,000 entries spanning the first Islamic millennium (the seventh century AD to the sixteenth) in the compendious *Programme of gold concerning* men of old by the seventeenth-century Syrian Ibn el-Imad. Professor Bulliet has drawn on a representative selection of these works, notably that of Ibn el-Imad, in his search for timetables of conversion in the major parts (six, by his division) of the medieval Islamic world.

He starts with biographical data relating to Muslims in Iran and more specifically with genealogies where an identifiable *Persian* name (as distinct from an Arabic/Muslim/biblical-cum-Quranic name) occurs as that of the earliest of a man's named forebears; such an occurrence, he believes (with some justification), marks the point at which conversion to Islam took place in that man's line.

On the basis of 469 Iranian genealogies of this kind, he finds that the pattern of Iranian conversion to Islam in medieval times almost exactly matches the shape of the bell-curve and logistic S-curve familiar to students of innovation diffusion. He then advances the proposition that such curves, and the standard distribution indicated by them, may represent the pattern of conversion not only in Iran but also in other parts of the Islamic world (and, for that matter, may be of even broader significance for students of religious conversion and mass ideological change); that is to say, the putative bell-curves for other Islamic areas may vary in terms of height versus squatness, indicating differing time-spans, but they will nevertheless still approximate to bell-curves in shape and hence the conversible into S-curves as the logistic summation of bell-curves. The difficulty here is that the biographical data relating to areas other than Iran (and, to some extent, Andalus) do not permit a plotting of points of conversion to Islam within family genealogies in the way that the Iranian data do. A second step is needed in order to make the non-Iranian data amenable to quantitative methods.

This second step involves the examination of given names. Bulliet looks at his Iranian data as a whole for names given to their sons by Muslim converts and by Muslims in general; in particular, he studies the occurrence of five specifically Muslim names (Muhammad, Ahmad etc) as against that of biblical-cum-Quranic names (Abraham, Joseph etc). He finds that the occurrence in general of biblical-cum-Quranic names is highest in the "early adopter" stage (i.e. conversion up to 13.5 per cent) and in the immediately following "early majority" stage (conversion up to 50 per cent). Among the sons of converts, it is only toward the end of the "early adopter" stage that the specifically Muslim names overtake the biblical-cum-Quranic names. The occurrence in general of the specifically Muslim names continues to increase through the "early majority" stage and peaks toward the end of the "late majority" stage (conversion up to 84 per cent); in the "laggard" stage the general occurrence of these names declines, but it continues to rise among the sons of "laggard" converts.

In essence, what all of this is seen as signifying is as follows: the short-lived use by the earlier converts of non-religious Arab names was linked primarily with the specifically Arab character of Umayyad rule; the subsequent relatively high incidence of biblical-cum-Quranic names in the early adopter period is to be explained in particular by the decline at that time of Arab tribal identification coupled with the social and psychological need experienced by some converts to choose for their sons names which were not too overtly Muslim, and could also be taken as Christian or Jewish. As the pace and degree of conversion to Islam increased, the need for ambiguous names declined in favour of a tendency among all Muslims to prefer specifically Muslim names. Once conversion was near to completion, the need for such proclamation of Muslim-ness became less strongly felt and the occurrence of specifically Muslim names declined, except among the sons of newly-converted laggards. Equipped with these conclusions and turning to representative biographical data relating to other parts of the Islamic world, Bulliet proceeds to discuss the timetables of conversion in those areas.

The limitations of Bulliet's regional surveys are easy enough to pinpoint. One may well ask why converts in the predominantly Zoroastrian pallet of Iran should have wished to give their sons Muslim names which could also be Christian or Jewish. In the case of Iran, it can be said that the available data on population and early conversion is too shaky to serve as the basis for a curve—how can (important) prisoners-of-war be regarded as part of the indigenous population?—and it is still possible to doubt whether conversion took place more quickly in Iran than in Iraq. One cannot but agree that "the social and religious impact of the conversion process upon Egypt and Tunisia is a subject that remains to be investigated", that "Syria does not present a tidy, easily understandable picture", and that the graph of conversion in Andalus "is obviously not a tidy bell-shaped curve".

But it would be a mistake to dwell on such aspects at the expense of the main points that emerge. The assertion of Muslim central political power in the eighth century was imposed by revolts which were frequently anti-Muslim in character, the Muslims still being a minority at that time. In Iran in the first half of the ninth century, however, the point of 50 per cent conversion was reached and "the rise of the independent Iranian dynasties was made possible by the realization that Islam in Iran was a permanent fact and could not be harmed by a fractioning of political power"; the same sort of thing happened in Egypt and Syria in the ninth and tenth centuries. Barbarians which had earlier witnessed revolts against Islam now became centres of heterodox revolts against Islam, as the Zaydis in the mountains south of the Caspian Sea in the late ninth and early tenth centuries. The cities were once important, however, and the whole phenomenon of rapid Islamic urban growth from about 750 onwards needs to be understood in terms of large-scale urban migration on the part of converts in Islam; in this connection, the theological and religio-legal alignments of ninth and tenth-century Iran and Iraq can usefully be viewed as reflecting clashes of interest between earlier converts and later converts. The main loser was the Abbasid caliphate, for "whenever Islam's survival came to be taken for granted, the caliph's underlying source of authority evaporated, leaving only a brittle superstructure".

As Bulliet says or, the contrary, much of their discussion is speculative—it is, however, speculation by one who is well qualified for the task, and Middle Eastern history is still short of such endeavours.

The image of Islam

By W. Montgomery Watt

ALBERT HOURANI :
Europe and the Middle East
226pp. Macmillan. £15.
0 333 26948 9

Islam has been a problem for Western Europe ever since the Arabs occupied Spain in the early eighth century and sent raiding parties into France. That was 1,250 years ago, but, with the possible exception of the early Crusading period the ordinary man in the West has never been so aware of Islam as during the past eighteen months, and he is now in process of forming new attitudes. It is thus useful at the present juncture to be reminded of the various stages through which Western ideas of Islam have passed. *Europe and the Middle East* consists of eight articles dealing with aspects of the Western attempt to understand Islam and the peoples professing to it. Some are fairly general, others concentrate on individuals like the poet and world-be reformer Wilfred Scowen Blunt and the scholar Sir Hamilton Gibb. All but one short essay have and 1978, and so they are not directly concerned with recent events.

Up to about 1100 Western Europeans were afraid of the military and naval strength of Islam, while admiring the luxury and gracious living enjoyed by Muslims, of which they caught glimpses at places like Cordova. With the closer contacts of the Crusading period and the Spanish Reconquista, Western scholars gained much information about Islam, but this was in part distorted to form an image of Islam which made it appear morally and intellectually inferior to Christianity. This false image tended to control Western thinking about Islam until the beginning of the twentieth century, and has not yet been fully replaced by a more accurate one.

Although after four successes the Crusades were ultimately a failure, Western self-confidence grew, especially after the discovery of America and of the sea-route to India. Even when the Ottoman Turks were threatening Central Europe, there was little polemic against Islam. Instead the image of Islam was used as an argument in disputes between Catholics and Protestants and between Christians and deists or atheists. In the eighteenth century a few scholars began the work of correcting the distorted image, and this continued in the nineteenth century. By this time, however, European powers had established their rule over millions of Muslims in North Africa, the Middle East and India, and the statesmen tended to regard the Islamic world "as a quaking jelly which would slip into the hands of European powers without difficulty". With one or two exceptions the religion of Islam was not a prominent factor in the Islamic world's recovery of independence in the twentieth century. Since about 1880 a new element has entered into Western studies of Islam. This is the personal friendship between Muslim and Christian scholars, which was rarely possible in previous ages, but it came relatively recently. Albert Hourani does not specifically note this point, but there is evidence for it in his articles.

Dr Hourani is a Western scholar who is also a Catholic Christian from an Arab background, and this gives a distinctive emphasis to his treatment of the theme. The community to which his ancestors belonged has had to maintain itself for centuries against various subtle pressures from the politically dominant Muslims among whom they lived. Survival was only possible by insisting on the errors of Islam and the religious truth of Christianity. Other Western Christian scholars are readier to see the great world religions, including Islam, as different ways of approaching and worshipping the one Supreme Being, and they aim at a fuller appreciation of the positive truths and achievements of these religions. Dr Hourani's preference, on the other hand, is for the view which thinks of Islam "as a stepping place on the road towards the Church".

Though he greatly admires Louis Massignon, probably the predeceased scholar of Islam this century and a devout Catholic, he hesitates to go as far in accepting Islam, and though he has "a concern for the attitudes of Western thinkers and scholars towards Islam and those who call themselves Muslims", he shows no enthusiasm for dialogue with Muslims. Instead he directs attention towards appropriate models and methods for studying the history of societies and cultures informed by Islam, insisting that the Islamic world is not a unity but varied and multiform.

In doing these questions the title of a multi-faceted work of Islam may be relevant, though in a novel way. The resurgence or revival of Islam is an undoubted fact of the last decade or two, and is best understood as a reaction of countless ordinary Muslims to various subtle pressures from the politically dominant Westerners with whom they have to rub cheek by jowl. This resurgence has strengthened the hands of the so-called "clergy" (who are Muslim and not priests). They are mostly backward-looking and conservative, eager to recover the power they as a class have lost during the last hundred years, and they have guided the revival movement to demand a return to medieval forms.

What it is important for Westerners to realize is that the "clergy" and other conservatives who have become so prominent in the media are not the whole of Islam. Among the Muslim population at all classes and especially among the statesmen who have had responsibility for governing their countries are modern states there are many liberal-minded men and women who reluctantly gave in to adopt their religion's beliefs and practices to the circumstances of today. The West should not forget about such persons but should give them all the support it can, since the Islam of the future is likely to owe more to them than to the conservatives.

Manchester's manuscripts

By Simon Digby

B. W. ROBINSON :
Persian Paintings in the John Rylands Library
365pp. Sotheby Parke Bernet. £35.
0 85667 072 3

This volume is the last of a trilogy by B. W. Robinson, cataloguing three major collections of illustrated Persian manuscripts in the British Isles. Previous volumes concerned the holdings of the Bodleian Library (1968) and the India Office Library (1976). Relieved by retirement from curatorial duties at the Victoria and Albert Museum, he has brought to a close a project on which he has laboured intermittently for four decades. These three volumes, in conjunction with the catalogues of the Chester Beatty collection and of the vast holdings of the British Library, describe for the student many thousands of Persian miniatures in the major public holdings in the British Isles.

Almost all of the John Rylands Library holdings came to Manchester in 1901, when the widow of John Rylands purchased the Eastern and Western manuscripts collected by a Scots noble house, the Earls of Crawford and Balcarres. In general", Robinson remarks, "it may be said that the majority of the manuscripts have been in Europe for at least 150 years." The Rylands holding shares the characteristic with the two other holdings which Robinson has catalogued. The illustrated manuscripts were brought together by their British owners out of a spirit of bibliophily, long before there was any accurate knowledge of the history of Persian painting on which a collector could depend. All three collections contain many historically interesting manuscripts, as well as individual paintings of great charm; they are almost entirely lacking in what must be considered the masterpieces of the Persian miniature tradition.

The Rylands holding contains no illustrated manuscript of the fourteenth century or earlier (though there are three strangely archaic late sixteenth century miniatures attempting to copy fine originals). Compared to the holdings of the India Office Library and of the Bodleian, it is rich in its diversity of fifteenth-century manuscripts. Its sixteenth and seventeenth-century miniatures also add to the art-historical material necessary for a precise understanding of the development and interaction of styles. These problems, and those of the attributions of paintings in individual manuscripts to different hands, are discussed with expertise by Robinson, who brings to the task a wide knowledge of other unpublished collections. This element of his style matches the breadth of his scholarship. His writing never fails to communicate the delight which he takes in Persian painting and arts of the book. This makes the path of the reader through a very substantial catalogue.

Of Robinson's trilogy, the Bodleian catalogue was scarcely illustrated, judging by the standards which have more recently come to expect. The present volume is even more copiously illustrated than the India Office catalogue of four years ago, but there has been some deterioration in the quality both of reproduction in the quality both of the colour and of the monochrome plates. There are numerous colour plates (*1977* for *1877* appears in the first paragraph of the introduction) and the first six colour-plates have departed from the order which the catalogue intended.

Turning to Mecca

By Martin Hinds

RICHARD W. BULLIET :
Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period
An Essay in Quantitative History.
184pp. Harvard University Press. £9.
0 674 17035 0

The Arab conquests in the Fertile Crescent, Egypt and Iran in the seventh century issued in rule by an Arab conquering caste held together by ethnic, linguistic and religious links. Islam in the Umayyad period (661-750) was primarily an Arab affair, being the ethnic religion of a ruling minority in conquered territories where the confessions of the majority were Zoroastrianism (in Iran) and Christianity (almost everywhere else), while Judaism was also well represented (notably in Iraq). By 850, however, Islam had clearly become the religious confession of the majority in all of these territories; the tribal labels of the Umayyads had for the most part long since been discarded and the term "Arab" once more signified simply "bedouins", as it had done in pre-Islamic times. Although further conversion to Islam would yet take place, a complex Islamic society had by then come into being, embracing the descendants of pagan Arabs, Christians, Zoroastrians and Jews.

What Richard Bulliet seeks to elucidate in *Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period* is the pattern of conversion to Islam and the consequences of the increasing rise of the Muslim community relative to the non-Muslim community in each of the main areas of what was by then the Islamic world. The focus is on "social conversion", i.e. conversion to a social identity (unnecessarily defined, and not on formal conversion (there being in any case no equivalent of a baptismal rite or dependence on a priestly individual). One major underlying concern is the input of converts into the social institutions of the Islam to which they had converted. And the work as a whole "attempts to tie together the histories of parts of the medieval Islamic world that are more commonly treated as discrete entities by means of a number of quite speculative hypotheses based upon and inspired by a close examination of certain quantifiable aspects of medieval Arabic sources".

These quantifiable aspects are to be found in the bulky genre of the Muslim biographical dictionary. Many such dictionaries are extant, with a total number of entries conservatively estimated in the order of one million; the total number of individuals represented by these entries is a matter of guesswork at the moment but can hardly be less than about 25,000. For example, the biographical *History of Baghdad* by the eleventh-century scholar al-Khatib al-Baghdadi contains nearly 8,000 entries, while there are about 10,000 entries spanning the first Islamic millennium (the seventh century AD to the sixteenth) in the compendious *Programme of gold concerning* men of old by the seventeenth-century Syrian Ibn el-Imad. Professor Bulliet has drawn on a representative selection of these works, notably that of Ibn el-Imad, in his search for timetables of conversion in the major parts (six, by his division) of the medieval Islamic world.

He starts with biographical data relating to Muslims in Iran and more specifically with genealogies where an identifiable *Persian* name (as distinct from an Arabic/Muslim/biblical-cum-Quranic name) occurs as that of the earliest of a man's named forebears; such an occurrence, he believes (with some justification), marks the point at which conversion to Islam took place in that man's line.

On the basis of 469 Iranian genealogies of this kind, he finds that the pattern of Iranian conversion to Islam in medieval times almost exactly matches the shape of the bell-curve and logistic S-curve familiar to students of innovation diffusion. He then advances the proposition that such curves, and the standard distribution indicated by them, may represent the pattern of conversion not only in Iran but also in other parts of the Islamic world (and, for that matter, may be of even broader significance for students of religious conversion and mass ideological change); that is to say, the putative bell-curves for other Islamic areas may vary in terms of height versus squatness, indicating differing time-spans, but they will nevertheless still approximate to bell-curves in shape and hence to convertible into S-curves as the logistic summation of bell-curves. The difficulty here is that the biographical data relating to areas other than Iran (and, to some extent, Andalus) do not permit a plotting of points of conversion to Islam within family genealogies in the way that the Iranian data do. A second step is needed in order to make the non-Iranian data amenable to quantitative methods.

This second step involves the examination of given names. Bulliet looks at his Iranian data as a whole for names given to their sons by Muslim converts and by Muslims in general; in particular, he studies the occurrence of five specifically Muslim names (Muhammad, Ahmad etc) as against that of biblical-cum-Quranic names (Abraham, Joseph etc). He finds that the occurrence in general of biblical-cum-Quranic names is highest in the "early adopter" stage (i.e. conversion up to 13.5 per cent) and in the immediately following "early majority" stage (conversion up to 50 per cent). Among the sons of converts, it is only toward the end of the "early adopter" stage that the specifically Muslim names overtake the biblical-cum-Quranic names. The occurrence in general of the specifically Muslim names continues to increase through the "early majority" stage and peaks toward the end of the "late majority" stage (conversion up to 84 per cent); in the "laggard" stage the general occurrence of these names declines, but it continues to rise among the sons of "laggard" converts.

In essence, what all of this is seen as signifying is as follows: the short-lived use by the earlier converts of non-religious Arab names was linked primarily with the specifically Arab character of Umayyad rule; the subsequent relatively high incidence of biblical-cum-Quranic names in the early adopter period is to be explained in particular by the decline at that time of Arab tribal identification coupled with the social and psychological need experienced by some converts to choose for their sons names which were not too overtly Muslim, and could also be taken as Christian or Jewish. As the pace and degree of conversion to Islam increased, the need for ambiguous names declined in favour of a tendency among all Muslims to prefer specifically Muslim names. Once conversion was near to completion, the need for such proclamation of Muslim-ness became less strongly felt and the occurrence of specifically Muslim names declined, except among the sons of newly-converted laggards. Equipped with these conclusions and turning to representative biographical data relating to other parts of the Islamic world, Bulliet proceeds to discuss the timetables of conversion in those areas.

The limitations of Bulliet's regional surveys are easy enough to pinpoint. One may well ask why converts in the predominantly Zoroastrian pallet of Iran should have wished to give their sons Muslim names which could also be Christian or Jewish. In the case of Iran, it can be said that the available data on population and early conversion is too shaky to serve as the basis for a curve—how can (important) prisoners-of-war be regarded as part of the indigenous population?—and it is still possible to doubt whether conversion took place more quickly in Iran than in Iraq. One cannot but agree that "the social and religious impact of the conversion process upon Egypt and Tunisia is a subject that remains to be investigated", that "Syria does not present a tidy, easily understandable picture", and that the graph of conversion in Andalus "is obviously not a tidy bell-shaped curve".

But it would be a mistake to dwell on such aspects at the expense of the main points that emerge. The assertion of Muslim central political power in the eighth century was imposed by revolts which were frequently anti-Muslim in character, the Muslims still being a minority at that time. In Iran in the first half of the ninth century, however, the point of 50 per cent conversion was reached and "the rise of the independent Iranian dynasties was made possible by the realization that Islam in Iran was a permanent fact and could not be harmed by a fractioning of political power"; the same sort of thing happened in Egypt and Syria in the ninth and tenth centuries. Barbarians which had earlier witnessed revolts against Islam now became centres of heterodox revolts against Islam, as the Zaydis in the mountains south of the Caspian Sea in the late ninth and early tenth centuries. The cities were once important, however, and the whole phenomenon of rapid Islamic urban growth from about 750 onwards needs to be understood in terms of large-scale urban migration on the part of converts in Islam; in this connection, the theological and religio-legal alignments of ninth and tenth-century Iran and Iraq can usefully be viewed as reflecting clashes of interest between earlier converts and later converts. The main loser was the Abbasid caliphate, for "whenever Islam's survival came to be taken for granted, the caliph's underlying source of authority evaporated, leaving only a brittle superstructure".

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The Caucasian adventure

By Peter Avery

MURIEL ATKIN :
Russia and Iran, 1780-1828
216pp. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. $20.
0 8166 0924 1

Two problems are admirably clarified in this work: whether or not Russian Asiatic expansion after Peter the Great's tentative beginnings was conducted according to a long-range, carefully devised plan; and how far, and often, officials on the spot may have taken initiatives in excess of St Petersburg's policies and intentions.

Skilful elucidation of sources, from which nothing relevant to the book's theses is excluded, has resulted in reconstruction of every step of Russian penetration of the Caucasus south to the "natural" frontier, the River Aras. In this process a main thesis is proved, that to accept the idea of a colossus moving forward according to a deeply conspired inductable plan, dating from long before the event, is to be gulled by a myth as false as the legend of Peter the Great's "Will". It is a useful myth for those who might use its advantages in bemusing intended prey, but Muriel Atkins's debunking of it is also helpful. She shows the advance to have been hesitant, often responsive to unforeseen events, beset by disasters due to immature rather than sound planning, and subject to swift changes of direction when freshly crowned Tsars rejected, as Paul did his mother's predecessors' Caucasian schemes, with which they seldom agreed.

Moreover, the Caucasian adventure was often peripheral to other affairs. It could be a useful diversion, to distract the Turks, for example, from the Balkans. It could assume importance if another Power seemed at all likely to implant itself influentially near the Caspian. It could help to screen consolidation in the Crimea; or be a ploy in the arrangements at Tilsit. If only gradually became unmalquishable. A war interrupted by uneasy, bickering armistices, it lasted nearly half a century before the colossus consolidated a new frontier for itself with Iran on the Aras. The secret weakness, this corruption, irresolution and perverse refused to trust the Tsar's benign and enlightened aims for them.

It also became impossible to leave what had started as haphazard and intermittent Caucasian and Caspian probes on account of another consideration, one from early days in the minds of the Commander of the initial Caucasian Line and which must be given precedence over other factors in the Russian advance: the almost morbid preoccupation of a land-locked Empire, not with prestige and civilizing missions, or with Indian conquest, or trade (though all these played a part, if only as pretexts and to obscure deeper motives), but with frontier security—pushing frontiers, especially those "infested" with ill-governed, uncivilized tribes, ever further forward till or lest no "barbarians" might remain outside in menace the furthest borders Russia could fortify. Whatever other international considerations might impinge on a Tsar and his Chancellor and ministers at the centre, officers in the outposts could not help but be acutely sensitive to slights, fancied or real, and be more prone than their distant superiors to a cavalier adoption of (in Anglo-Indian terms) the "forward frontier policy".

In any event, in the early nineteenth century the Tsar would only hear of incidents when it was too late for anything to be done about them. As late as March 1885 General Komorov was within an ace of precipitating an Anglo-Russian war by killing 600 Afghans he was expelling from what he claimed must be the Russian side of the frontier at Panjdeh in Turkestan where it bordered Afghanistan. Normally such officers would have to be supported, and it was not hard to persuade equally frontier-sensitive colleagues in St Petersburg to their way of thinking, while advantage might some times be gained from claiming that the government could not invariably be responsible for "hot-headed" actions in remote frontier posts.

Muriel Atkin certainly lends substance to the impression reading histories of Russian expansion in Asia tends to give: that distant "warm waters" or India were not the immediate magnets. It was the obsessive craving to make original lines invulnerable by creating new ones further forward that primarily motivated the constant forward movement, in a process to which, so long as this sensitivity to frontiers remains coupled with overriding mistrust and a feeling of general insecurity, there need be no end. Any discomfiture, in the process, of other Powers can be an added bonus, to be exploited as circumstances permit. As for the little peoples in between, what do they signify when weighed in the balance with the safety of Russia? But ironically, and probably for the same geo-political and historical reasons, Iranian Shahs have traditionally been just as sensitive over frontiers as Russian Tsars, a point which, as Muriel Atkin amply demonstrates, completely escaped the Russians.

Her book's value as a reminder of fundamentals in the history of Russia in Asia makes it more important than it would in any case be simply as the long-awaited study of the early stages of Russian occupation of the Caucasus and attainment of Russia's first boundary with Iran. It must be praised for lucidity and impeccable deployment of enviably omnicompetent and comprehensive sources. More might have been said about Fath Ali Shah's difficulties, and his preference for dealing directly with Britain's King rather than with a British commercial company operating in India—a point which added confusion to already ambiguous relations. But it was not with Britain that the book was intended primarily to deal. And, while the tempo of the 1780s was slower, it supplies models so applicable to faster-moving times that a few misprints cannot mar its appositeness.

Off with their heads

By Kate Flint

SAM McBRATNEY:
Lagan Valley Details
137pp. Belfast: Blackstaff Press. £6.95.
0 85640 189 7

Unsurprisingly, the atmosphere of Sam McBratney's accomplished and enjoyable volume of short stories, *Lagan Valley Details*, is one of threats, violence and suspicion. Unsurprisingly because the tales are set in Northern Ireland, and though only one of them deals directly with the Troubles, the related issues of authority, law and order form a continual, potentially destabilizing element in the narrative background.

The repertoire of cruelty practised by McBratney's characters ranges from the psychological to the physical; from the teasing, bullying, even murderous games of children to the conversation-stopping invective of the elderly Sadie towards a visiting American trying to trace his father's folks from the Maze: a story which makes an overt and of literary allegiance through its title, "Endgame". Sadie's deliberate aggression borders on the irrelevant cantankerousness of Mr F's aunt: indeed, watching her taxoup rattle in its saucer, the visitor doubts her sanity.

The question of what constitutes madness, the breakdown of an individual system of order, is continually raised. Should Patsy Quigley, with his obsession for flight, retreating in secret to the garden shed to punch variegated sizes of fluffy feathers into a pratatype hang glider, be allowed by priest and pub to fulfil his conviction—his campulsion—and jump off the Dromore viaduct? Did the young Maureen Frith know precisely and coldly the implications of the trust-game she instigated, when she dared a small boy to walk blindfold into the path of an oncoming bakery van? F. G. R. Ivas, continually enraged by the breakdown of discipline in the secondary school of which he is Senior Master, fumes against the fashionable educational gimmicks practised by the chicken liberals who are his colleagues, even superiors: yet is his solution to this collapse of authority—to give each child a pet, give him time to grow fond of it and then, should they commit some misdemeanour, to execute the unoffending animal in front of the school assembly—a logical extension of his observations of adolescent sentiments, or an unreasonable manifestation of authoritarian paranoia? With a typical touch of nicely dry humour, Ives is last heard of offering his educational services to the Iato Shah's regime.

Moreover, McBratney implicitly asks, what right do people have nor just to judge states of mind, but to interfere with the motives and decisions of others? He makes us consider the action of George Forrester, ferreting for his own satisfaction into the past and current behaviour of Maureen Frith, newly reappeared in Lisburn society as Reenie Lerossa, wife—or rather widow, in suspicious circumstances—of a local industrialist; and to observe the persecuting morality of an evangelical gospel group pursuing a member's adulterous husband and his partner with anonymous, insinuating phonecalls.

Marriage, with or without adultery, real or imagined, is another area combining personal choice with socially prescribed ideas of order and propriety. It is this central issue in "Martha and Mr Crow," when a middle-aged woman makes a disastrous second marriage to an obese manufacturer of a proprietory cure for piles; and in "Soul of the Hills", which tells of a bystow dishellering Minister of Religion's emotional blackmail at the literary hand of his wife's lover. But nowhere is the question of an individual's decision with regard to a relationship clearer than in "Sheffield", the one story which deals directly with the British Army's presence in Northern Ireland.

Hazel, the schoolgirl daughter of a Protestant family, commits the socially unacceptable act of falling in love with an English soldier; she is attracted not just by his looks and laugh but by the foreign allure of his rifle, "his thick boots and the hullet-proof waistcoat and the way of talking he'd learnod across the water". But her courtship has to contend both with the feelings of her brother, nursing a gun in his attic bedroom, and of her father, bitter and distressed at the ten-year-old presence of soldiers on the streets, "now trampling over my own flesh and blood, my whole, bloody whole life". Hazel leaves him in search of a stamp for her letter to Yorkshire. She, unlike most of McBratney's characters, has, at least, some means of escape from those who attempt to control her immediate situation.

Trauchle in the but and ben

By L. D. Burnard

THER URQUHART:
A Diver In China Seas
214pp. Quartet. £6.50.
0 7043 2255 2

Fred Urquhart has produced four novels and countless short stories since 1936, as well as having edited such volumes as *Great True Escape Stories* and a cartoon biography of Winston Churchill. His tales, of which this is the latest volume, have been broadcast on what I suspect his would call the wireless and translated into several European languages. The former achievement, if not the latter, seems peculiarly appositi for a writer so irretrievably wedded as he is to the use of Scots dialect. As a sentench, I must confess that I find a trifle indigestible such sentences as "Herry was unemployed at the time and there wosn't room in our pokey wee but and ben for both him and me" or "Elsporh McDougall was finding life a bir of a trauchle", and the indigestion is further compounded in this volume by an occasional confusion of narrative voices.

About half of the stories are told in the first person, where dialect seems appropriate, but of the remainder only one or two employ a neutral narrator. "A Camp Follower" for example, is fully dramatically told through the eyes of its heroine, a luckless Scots lassie trammelled up in the Napoleonic wars. Its diction wobbles uncertainly between Mrs Oliphant ("They would comfort each other for youth's eternal longing and loneliness on the banks of springy turf beneath Salisbury Crags") and Robbie Burns ("William was a big sonsy fine-looking lad . . . He was a likeable creature, cheery and gallus"), before plumping finally for Georgette Heyer with the arrival on the scene of one Francisco Goya, just in time to save our heroine from the gaoler ("Even though he'd painted her without a stitch on, Señor Goya had aye behaved like a perfect gentleman!"). This sort of purple-streaked tartan is fortunately quite rare in the other tales, but there remain several in which a carefully established dialect narrator fights for control of the tale with a bland characterless one. The narrator of "Like Arrows in the Hands of a Giant", for example, [illegible] the gossips at Mrs Rintoul's, but is also allowed to be privy to Jessie's mind.

Several of the stories turn, like this one, on the relation between mistress and maidservant and are concerned with that peculiarly concentrated spitefulness of which elderly ladies are often both victim and agent. The main characters are nearly all women of a certain age—Urquhart's men are invariably hyperpsi as bullying fathers, sentimental lovers or conceited boys—and the narratives nearly all chronicle a remuoeless decline. A favourite theme is a modern variant on the old saw which might be called the Gancrotim Gup Game. "Nostalgia for a Waltz Dream", for example, begins with a slaughing match, brought on by rock and roll, between Mrs Nanco McQueen and her daughter, and then shifts by way of a flashback (in favourite Urquhart device) to a slanging matchco, brought on by silent movies between Nance and her father. Back in the present, Nance muses "If only Jean would be a sensible lassie and give up all this rockin' and rollin' dirt and go to the pictures instead". But the opposition is unbalanced, for the tale ends with what the narrator describes as "the moaning of a glottel-stopped moron rendering a rock 'n' roll numbee". This partnership spoils the story's point—the structurally identical role the two play in the parent-child relation.

Urquhart's real interest seems to be the passing of time, not surprisingly in an octogenarian. "Now that I feel death's cauld hand crawling over me to every night I keep turning my mind to the corpies I've seen in my day": the narrator of the title story in this collection begins; there is a dour delight evident throughout in the detailing of the little miseries of bourgeois life of one man, Sam Bheugu, a black freedom fighter whose growing awareness of the anomalous political situation provides the driving force for the subsequent events of the novel. At the point where Ebersohn chooses to begin his story, Sam has already been arrested by the security police and, during the course of his detention, has been subjected to a method of torture so brutal as to have caused irremedial brain damage. It is Sam's painful, halting progress towards consciousness and understanding, his slow dawning remembrance of the events of the previous night and the details of his torture that constitutes the framework of the book.

Unlike Ebersobo's earlier novel, Like the Kenyan writer, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, Wessel Ebersohn chooses to situate the (supposedly) fictitious characters of his novel in a world that is real and instantly recognizable. The scene is a South African security prison; the subject, in general terms, the fight for racial justice, but more particularly, the story of one man, Sam Bheugu, a black freedom fighter whose growing awareness of the anomalous political situation provides the driving force for the subsequent events of the novel. At the point where Ebersohn chooses to begin his story, Sam has already been arrested by the security police and, during the course of his detention, has been subjected to a method of torture so brutal as to have caused irremedial brain damage. It is Sam's painful, halting progress towards consciousness and understanding, his slow dawning remembrance of the events of the previous night and the details of his torture that constitutes the framework of the book.

Keeping control

By Sally Ramsey

WESSEL EBERSOHN:
Stone up the Anger
240pp. Gollancz. £5.95.
0 575 02821 1

A Lonely Place to Die (1979), this is no thriller. Any expectations of mystery or intrigue are quelled by the dry finality of the opening sentence: "Sam Bhongu knew that he was dying." Nevertheless, the author's superb sense of timing ensures that the whole truth is not revealed until the closing pages of the novel when the complete historical background to the event has been reconstructed, imaginatively and methodically, and each individual motive has been explored. In this way, hysteria and gaudy sensationalism are made to bow to authorial self-control.

Essentially, the narrative is divided into two parts, two separate areas of time which gradually draw closer together as the novel unfolds. Each has its own peculiar tone and language. Thus the precise, agonizingly detailed accounts of Sam's present state of mind are thrown into relief by the softer, more lyrical flashback scenes which re-enact his past; and his acute perspicacity at the height of his suffering in prison is set against the hazy formlessness of his youthful idealism. In the end, the book is more than propaganda precisely because of this richness which allows no freedom fighter to be totally heroic, nor any security policeman to be irrevocably inhumane.

As the scene of the Soppiehpen riot demonstrates, the thirst for bloodshed, whether in retaliation against the injustices of a system, or in self-righteous defence of the system, only creates enemies and in the end certain death. The epigraph quotes Menninger to this effect: "It is true . . . that in the end everybody kills himself in his own selected way, fast or slow, soon or late." Acknowledgment of this truth leads to a tacit understanding between Lategan (one of the security police officers) and Sam Bhongu since both are willing to admit, if only to themselves, that ultimately they alone are responsible for their own destruction.

Wessel Ebersohn's strength lies in the power of his understatement. In the end, it is the unspoken words that loome largest, the unuttered blow that threatens spiral violence and revenge. For the strange sense of muted triumph with which the novel ends points to the truth as well as the cost of silent endurance, of storing up the anger for the day of reckoning dawns. This is the final, awesome message of a book that keeps its readers on the qhark while retaining the power and urgency and horror which Sam Bhongu's own situation, as one of many writers who have been forced into exile in order to continue and publish their works, can reinforce. *Stone Up the Anger* is a very fine book—intensely disturbing, necessarily controversial, smouldering with implications.

Global walkabout

By Peter Lewis

MURRAY BAIL:
Homesickness
317pp. Macmillan. £6.95.
0 333 29896 9

In Murray Bail's first novel, *Homesickness*, there is a fleeting mention of one of the most famous of all Australian paintings, Russell Drysdale's "The Drover's Wife". This painting in turn inspired one of the most famous of Australian short stories, also called "The Drover's Wife"—a perversely ironic interpretation of Drysdale intended to subvert "the Australian myth". The author of the story is none other than Murray Bail. This passing inreference, which will be immediately obvious to Australian literati but may otherwise pass unnoticed, is indicative of the novel's Joycean self-consciousness, which recalls *Ulysses* in its use of half-concealed motifs, submerged patterns, displays of erudition, and verbal high-jinks—when the action moves to Quito, for example, there is a parade of words beginning with "q". And in the sixth and shortest of the novel's seven sections, the third-person narration is dropped in favour of a first-person confessional mode in which the author seems to speak in his own voice before resuming his omniscient role in the final part—this is reminiscent of Fowles's "Interruptions" in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. Writing in a symbolist rather than a realist way, Bail is a conspicuous fabulator. But if the book delights in its own artifice, it does so with more artistic discretion than is often the case in "new fiction".

To anyone familiar with Bail's work, his techniques in this novel will come as no surprise. He has established himself as one of the leading prose-writers of the Australian new wave, possessing an uncanny to foreign literatures and a refreshing freedom from the "official" Australian story tradition. For various socio-cultural reasons, the short story has always occupied a more central place in Australian fiction than in European literatures; and short fiction has been especially strong there during the recent past. Though Bail has now turned from the short to the novel, he is associated with something much more ambitious than the thirteen more traditional short stories in his first collection, *Unfamiliar Fish*. Bail's relative reticence in presenting human beings of depth. The trouble with this kind of novel is that if it does not come off, it can seem pretentious, self-indulgent, and overwritten. There are not changes to be made. Bail's *Homesickness* is especially in an Australian context, for it cannot escape them entirely.

However, works obliquely, by supporting a group of thirteen different globe-trotting Australians, most of the cast gathered together with another Aussie who mysteriously shadows them, is exploring the vexed question of Australian identity and culture. *Homesickness* is a novel about a search for an answer that cannot be provided in the way that the hoped for, since what the characters are looking for has to be sought rather than found. This is clearly expressed in the final section when the Australian travellers find themselves in a completely alien and brightly lit museum where they virtually become the exhibits, unconsciously pursuing, for once, everything exists as possibility; forced to confront themselves, they are placed in a context where existential choices cannot have to be made. The purpose of travel consequently turns out to be the production of homesickness, an escape from home but also a discovery: to arrive at where one started from and to know it for the first time.

The journey, like the novel, is long, bizarre, and Pynchonesque. The opening is realistic enough, the illusion of realism soon proves to be deceptive. Wherever the journeyers go they are always going to museums—nothing is quite as it seems or the reader expects. The museum is a place where people go to see different from what they purport to be, and as they continue their journey in London, Ecuador, New York, Moscow, the real and the fantastic become interchangeable. When we visit the Lenin Mausoleum they are locked in and asked to carry out a check that the corpse is real.

Much of the interest of the novel with its off-beat satire and its strained, oddball comedy, lies in these surreal set-pieces, often based in museums. Bail's inventiveness is providing a varied diet of about highly commendable, but there are serious drawbacks too, in that the situations become more important than the thirteen main characters. Where they are and what they are cannot take precedence over what they are themselves. In a short, satirical novel this would be quite acceptable, but in a novel of this length it is not. Bail's relative success in creating a fully sale environment, 100 per cent risk-free. Also, the use of the word environment itself is now. The environment used to be a neutral term for any surroundings. Now it is emotionally charged: it means nature, an aboriginal gift from the Book of Genesis, as it were, a heritage to be protected.

The earth's girdling waters and envelope of atmosphere are no longer the source of divine vengeance, visiting thunderbolts on liars, and floods or flames on godlessness. Without moral agency of their own, they are becoming the passive, vulnerable condition for life on this planet. The violent emotions that used to be centred on purity of doctrine, purity of cult, purity of sex, seem now to be focused on purity of the environment. Plausibly, the change in value may be due to the change in technology.

Mankind has new and terrible powers for self-destruction, never known before. That is true. We know that the present threats have never been so grave. We know that the impurities that pollute the air, spoil the drinking water, taint the fish and vegetation, are identifiable by a strictly technical procedure that has nothing to commun with religion or magic. We therefore suppose that the modern concern for purity has nothing in common either with ancient contests in its name. We can only imagine that we are really speaking about something different by paying no attention to the structure of the debate. A closer look shows that little has changed in a 1,000 years. Technology has changed, yes, certainly, unrecognizably. But once outside the laboratory we still talk about pollution and purity and natural goodness in much the same terms as before.

It seems as if we can learn about everything, but not about our sacred processes. Inside the test tubes we can analyse to a millionth part, but we cannot even imagine how to reach objectivity in our own public affairs. The greater the real danger, the more the need to take the comparative perspective seriously. When I raise the anthropological comparison, it is usually brushed aside as a professional quirk, or at best as a quaint after-dinner pundoy. Yet we cannot make mature decisions unless we understand how nature and purity rise to the surface: of ritual consciousness in the form of an urgent, dangerous problem. I will preface a discussion of pollution by first considering how witchcraft and heresy illustrate how our ancestors used the concept of purity in nature. This is no theoretical device—it is the only way to explain the fundamental social processes which mould political awareness.

The current debate on the environment lies in a straight line of descent. We cannot now repress recalcitrant brethren on the ground that they are possessed by devils or witchcraft. We have recently stopped repressing sexual deviants, we have stopped trying to conduct our system of repression by means of any defined concept of deviance. Trespass, obstruction and physical assault can be defined, but not pornography, indecency, foul language, any more than sin. It is no longer plausible to justify repression by labelling non-conformist characters as perversions of human nature. Here follows an attempt to understand this shift of viewpoint from some established consensus to a grey area linking right and wrong.

Let us first retrace the line back to the seventeenth century when witchcraft beliefs were discredited. After the 1680s no judge which purge occurred. We know the social function of witchcraft in a stable paradigm. We know how the model for unsocialized unnatural humans was deployed. Deviants were popularly labelled witches and judicially destroyed. By agreement on witchcraft an intimate consensus was agreed on human nature. But by the eighteenth century the witchcraft threat became obsolete. Historians give many reasons for the discrediting of witchcraft: generally they describe it as a dark shadow pur to flight by the dawning Age of Reason. Such an intellectualist bias ignores the use of witch beliefs as an instrument of social control. Historians should ask what alternative instruments have been used in its place in this last 200 years, or what other models of perversion in place of witchcraft have served to sustain our commitment to fragile social forms, since this is the role anthropologists find it playing.

In Central Africa the picture of the witch is very present to the minds of all. The witch lunks like any other human being; he is probably your own uncle or elder brother, but his hypocritical appearance hides a lust for human flesh. The theory is that he or she is allied with other witches, their covens meets at the crossroads or night, disembodied they fly through the air, jackals and wild cats are their familiars. These are the sinister people who seem to conspiserate for misfortune but really are killing babies and poisoning crops. These monsters are not randomly distributed through the population. When analysed, the beliefs reveal a local political theory. One people identifies witches among corrupt power holders; then the popular belief in witchcraft is a continual warning to village headmen not to exceed the powers of their office, and eventually, when a succession crisis arises, witchcraft will be invoked to justify rejecting the unpopular leader and adopting his rival. In these cases the idea of human perversion is manipulated by the border against abuses of power delegated to the centre.

Inevitably, in such a system central power is weak and stays weak, and the social unit tends to split whenever it grows beyond the fifty souls who can be managed on an interpersonal basis. In another population, political consensus is on the side of orthodoxy, in favour of central authority; then it is agreed that ambitious upstarts are more likely to be noxious perverts than those who carry the burden of public office. There are many examples where the concept of human perversion is used to support strong government. In these cases the opinire explains the idea of witchcraft to control its critics and rivals. The great Bantu leaders who emerged in the turmoils of the nineteenth century wisely tried to have a monopoly of witch-finding techniques and used them to denounce the enemies of the state. Sanctimes a theory of hereditary taint was elaborated such that only commoners inherited witchcraft.

Purity and danger revisited

By Mary Douglas

The text of a lecture which was part of a series on "Pollution Theory" given last February at Princeton. A version of the lecture was delivered at the Institute of Education in London on May 12 this year.

"Nature is loved . . . as the City of God" said Emerson. He added that nature is loved "although, or rather because there is no citizen".

This will serve as a text for writing about the pollution of Nature. It may seem obvious that Nature replaces God in a secular society. But it does not seem obvious that contemporary cult should be paid to an empty shrine or that the modern City of God should necessarily be unpopulated. Yet this has a ring of truth. If we want to compare the sacred places of the world, Mecca is crowded, Rome is crowded, Jerusalem is crowded, but the Sierra meadows are vacant spaces, loved explicitly because they are vacant.

Sociologists treat the secularity of the Western world as a break with the past. If it does indeed introduce a great discontinuity in world history, then anthropologists' work must seem rather irrelevant to modern problems, since anthropology interprets the beliefs of other places and earlier times. I here advance the argument that there is no sharp break, but only a blind spot. We could be very wrong if we believe that our secularity prevents us from the worst excesses of religious fanaticism, and even wrong in thinking that our concern for public hygiene is essentially different from ritual purity.

Admittedly, the dangers to the environment makes a special kind of modern predicament. Something is new. We have always assumed that risks to life and limb should be reduced. As one new technology of large-scale production shows its dangerous side-effects, number is sought, eventually to be replaced in turn. This has been the path of technological development. What is new is an implicit idea that government should be responsible for creating a fully safe environment, 100 per cent risk-free. Also, the use of the word environment itself is new. The environment used to be a neutral term for any surroundings. Now it is emotionally charged: it means nature, an aboriginal gift from the Book of Genesis, as it were, a heritage to be protected.

The earth's girdling waters and envelope of atmosphere are no longer the source of divine vengeance, visiting thunderbolts on liars, and floods or flames on godlessness. Without moral agency of their own, they are becoming the passive, vulnerable condition for life on this planet. The violent emotions that used to be centred on purity of doctrine, purity of cult, purity of sex, seem now to be focused on purity of the environment. Plausibly, the change in value may be due to the change in technology.

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The current debate on the environment lies in a straight line of descent. We cannot now repress recalcitrant brethren on the ground that they are possessed by devils or witchcraft. We have recently stopped repressing sexual deviants, we have stopped trying to conduct our system of repression by means of any defined concept of deviance. Trespass, obstruction and physical assault can be defined, but not pornography, indecency, foul language, any more than sin. It is no longer plausible to justify repression by labelling non-conformist characters as perversions of human nature. Here follows an attempt to understand this shift of viewpoint from some established consensus to a grey area linking right and wrong.

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Inevitably, in such a system central power is weak and stays weak, and the social unit tends to split whenever it grows beyond the fifty souls who can be managed on an interpersonal basis. In another population, political consensus is on the side of orthodoxy, in favour of central authority; then it is agreed that ambitious upstarts are more likely to be noxious perverts than those who carry the burden of public office. There are many examples where the concept of human perversion is used to support strong government. In these cases the opinire explains the idea of witchcraft to control its critics and rivals. The great Bantu leaders who emerged in the turmoils of the nineteenth century wisely tried to have a monopoly of witch-finding techniques and used them to denounce the enemies of the state. Sanctimes a theory of hereditary taint was elaborated such that only commoners inherited witchcraft.

Thus we find African theories of distinctive genetic flaws which put aristocrats or chiefs beyond suspicion of witchcraft.

The comparative politics of witchcraft is worth analysing because these beliefs are not static. In a shifting political dialogue they change: when the balance of power is steady, the local theory of witchcraft stays steady; when the distribution of power is uneven, there is no real dialogue, but the local theory of unnatural vice gives support to those in power. When the balance of power is in delicate equilibrium, the centre dialogues with the border from shared premises about depraved humanity. The concepts of natural versus unnatural wrongdoing have to change step by step with each change of political mood. To illustrate the plasticity of such beliefs, I give an example of rather swift changes.

In an elegant account of a dramatic shift in values, Edwin Ardener describes how the Bakweri people in the West Cameroons were influenced by dark human powers for evil. The jealously egalitarian society had been prosperous in trade and agriculture in the second half of the nineteenth century until it came into conflict with the Colonial government. Colonial peace brought labour migration, cash crops and economic decline. Bakweri become overpraggressive and apathetic. Jealousy overwhelmed competitiveness. Bakweri came to believe that a farmer could only have prospered by foul means: he had turned his neighbours into zombies and forced them to work so hard at night on his fields that they were too tired the next day to work on their own. The witch idea explained their economic failures and set off a cycle of further failure and mistrust. So discouraging was the mood that if any one had a good year, he had best keep quiet about it. To spend on modest home improvements (such as a tin roof) was to invite charges of witchcraft. Images of perversion usually stigmatize some border categories, letting the rest go free. But the Bakweri image applied to everyone and put no brakes on ill-will. Needless to say, the economy did not prosper. Then 1954 brought a sudden boom in banana prices and big profits for everyone all round. They looked at each other and agreed that small improvements to the home this year would not be signs of witchcraft. Rapidly over the next five years the Bakweri villages invested in anti-witchcraft technology, performed spectacular rituals and settled down to live together in an expanding economic climate. At the same time they kept alive the possibility of switching back to the old structure of beliefs and the old symbols should they perceive a changed situation. Indeed, in 1963, economic and political setbacks reduced the level of the Bakweri economy to lower than before the banana boom: A new set of beliefs with the same structure as the old zombie beliefs started to dominate their cosmology.

In this context the Jewish religion's rejection of witchcraft seems to have been much more than a castigation of unnatural vice. Witches were known, there and there; but the Jewish faith never allowed the evil powers of witchcraft to compare with God's vengeance. They knew about witches, but just did not take them seriously enough to accuse each other and invent means of detecting and thwarting them. One might say that their monotheism was too strong but more accurately, they used their monotheism to prescribe such complete regulation of their lives that there was little room for ambiguity in which witchcraft beliefs flourish. They did not need to bring down their overambitious rulers, since God through his prophets was always threatening to do it for them, and eventually always did.

Michel Foucault, inspired with a liberal passion against state control, has spent a life of scholarship documenting repressive institutional forms and the state's invasive ultimate life. Since the seventeenth century more persons, he declares, have been confined, more insane have been shut away, more sick have been segregated. Families and friends have played their own coercive roles in this trend, now carefully documented by Donzelot. It seems that the growth of industrial society demands from each of us increasingly higher degrees of personal discipline to escape the adverse judgment of neighbours. The further that industrialization proceeds, the more our tolerance of one another seems to decline. As citizens we are increasingly irritated by personal eccentricities and failings in the family or in the neighbourhood. Instead of indulging our local deviants, we find excuses to place them under constraint. As private individuals we have done our bit to give the state reasons for extending its powers. But notice carefully that this growth of personal regimentation has coincided with the end of witch beliefs. Remember that it was while turbulent princes were wrecking each other's fortresses that seventeenth-century witchcraft trials convicted thousands. Governmental weakness gave its to aid peculiar forms of coercion. It was in remote districts, where the arm of the law only intermittently reached, that witches were executed by the dozen. Anthropologists observe that witch beliefs flourish in political ambiguity. The more that right behaviour is explicitly defined, the less the scope or need for invoking extraordinary models of unnatural vice to stiffen conformity. To accuse of witchcraft lies somewhere between lynch law and common law, for it is at least an effort to formulate principles of evidence and principles of good behaviour that will attract consensus. When witches are executed, we witness the violent combustion of failed consensus.

Given the choice between the intrusive modern state and the informal neighbourly monitoring of non-conformists, with the ultimate threat of accusing as witches, one could hardly advocate a political condition fettered in sinlessness and ambiguity, where the dominant party is driven to charge its inarticulate obstructors with witchcraft, and its articulate critics of heresy. If modern critics of state control dared to recommend a pre-Enlightenment condition instead of the modern forms of repression they deplore, they could try to argue the case. But the full case includes comparison of all the forms of repression, official and unofficial, ordained and spontaneous, formal and informal. Without such comparative overview we are in danger of seeing our present beliefs against a funnsy backdrop of a world where an repression is ever exerted as all.

An intellectualist theory of the advance of knowledge is always flattering to the present day. James Frazer flattered his generation when he taught that scientific truths had displaced religious doctrine. They thought religion as a set of intellectual propositions about the nature of the universe; it was easy then to suppose religion was bound to lose credit in face of the better descriptions of the universe provided by science. But another tradition of anthropology follows Durkheim in backgrounding the intellectual propositions and foregrounding the moral persuasions of religion, its power in upholds a social commitment. This sociological tradition affords a more urgent reason why witchcraft beliefs waned when they did. Both witchcraft and religion lost credibility when they had to compete with more direct mechanisms of coercion. The mid-seventeenth century saw major political upheavals throughout Europe and a steady increase of centralized monarchical power. Improved communications served in improve executive control. Neither the Enlightenment nor the industrial revolution could have occurred but for Europe's turning away from civil strife and making a voluntary commitment to strong government. In consequence, misdemeanours which earlier would have been judged by local opinionness prejudice could be increasingly turned over to the civil authorities. Fear of hellfire and threat of live burning were less needful instruments of control as the reach of the law extended. The highwayman's corpse swinging from the gibbonts a clue to why the witch's corpse no longer burnt at the stake. Hundrum technical improvements in shipping and canals, toll-gates and new roads were the substructure of the new polity, in which new ideas about human nature and the universe were acceptable.

Step by step with civic inventions the popular idea of unnatural vice was steadily transformed. First, when Christendom was realized in small and self-sufficient communities, members could be reconciled to each other and blame cast on devils, controllable by holy water and sacraments. Then, when the Renaissance discoveries burst the bounds of knowledge and fealty, devils were replaced by witches, subversive denatured humans, to be ruthlessly stamped out. As the state advanced into village and family life, the range of informal control narrowed and the popular image of the pervert shrank to a domestic scale. A major change in political intentions and the growth of technical means for realizing these intentions made the idea of cosmic perversion superfluous. Surely too the idea of a total cosmic pervert, in the shape of a village witch, was too dangerous a weapon to be left unlicensed in the hands of the citizenry. No doubt the growth of central government was likely to spell the decline of witchcraft. No longer were deviants attacked for their unnatural alliance with cosmic forces, eating cadavers and sucking offspring of monstrous sexual congress. Over the last two centuries the pervert lost any supernatural attributes. Only the idea of unnatural sex was left to the neighbours as grounds for suppressing small-scale, local non-conformity.

Foucault gives dates which suggest that a general obsession with sexual conformity and an insatiable curiosity about sex began to dominate European culture just as the obsession with witches dies away. A child might lie or steal; neighbours whispered, parents worried, was he or she a pervert? A new expertise arose among doctors and priests for guiding the parents of child perverts. Public authorities engaged consultants for assessing perversions and their response to punishment. They needed to know the pos-

sible contamination of innocents by contact with unnatural sex. We know the end of this cultural phase because we have lived through it. Indeed, we have come out the other side too recently to be sure what has happened. Naturally, we rejoice that sexual repression is over. Certainly the case for the liberation of women and the liberation of homosexuals has been made. But the gloom with which we used to contemplate the decline of the family is not yet dispelled. At least we can recognize that we are living through cultural change, but it is not sure that we are free from censorship.

With all due credit to Freud, if something like psychoanalysis did not exist, it would have had to be invented for this new cultural climate. Psychoanalysis fastened curiosity more and more explicitly upon the idea of normal sex. If dialogue about normality is implicitly a dialogue about abnormality, we have not stopped thinking about perversion. While finally tending to liberate the more obvious types of sexual deviance, psychoanalysis has promoted a close public censorship on minor sexual mores. It has provided a terminology for habitual sexual monitoring. However much it may disclaim a normative lesson, it is being used for attack and riposte in those interpersonal relationships in which images of good and evil are spontaneously evoked. The reduced social scale brings us into the special province of anthropology. I am arguing here that it will be an act of cultural bigotry, intellectual blindness of the most inexcusable kind, with tragic consequences, for the world to brush aside as irrelevant to our unique condition the experience the human race has already had with perversion and impurity.

Though the witch and the pervert have been chased off the scene, a metapolitical dialogue about perversion still goes on in our current discussion of nature. Perversion means wrongness, not at a mere behavioural level, but wrongness deep in the being and essence of the person. To charge an opponent with perversion is at the same stroke to claim nature for one's own side. The perversion charge, the pointed old fashioned case, is the strong case of any claim to be naturally right. More diluted claims to natural rightness are only part of the same conversation.

Established authority does not need to have its rightness in explicit principles all the time. But when it is challenged, the debate between authority and its rivals develope at two levels. At the first, less articulate level, challengers can be referred to a vague unformulated view of human nature. What are our natural proclivities? Can trajectories improve virtue or intelligence? Do humans respond to violence? or to reasoning? Do bloody punishments deter criminals? So long as legitimacy is not seriously at issue, policy decisions can be justified in the name of human nature, implied in a piecemeal way. The eternal verities tend to be made explicit only when political disputes become intractable. When people fundamentally disagree about sovereignty, before they fight they try to clarify basic principles of ethics and existence. When the division is so deep, the articulate image of the pervert is not enough to muster agreement. We move to the prototypical heresy debate.

To establish a common basis with the heresy controversies of the past, first let us clearly characterize heresy. By definition it emerges in conflict with an orthodoxy. Essentially it is a domestic debate. Foreigners either negotiate or fight, but they do not enter a heresy argument unless someone wants them to join the community. The debate is always about logical observations of an exceedingly recondite kind, for instance concerning the human nature of Christ, or the divine capabilities of humans. Behind these abstractions there is the second agenda because heresy is a radical form of political protest. The agenda for seeking abstract truth has to be followed through to the end because dispute at the technical and practical levels cannot be resolved. Radicals find themselves confronted by entrenched institutions upholding established theories, the first supported by the second. They plunge into heresy when it is not enough to be right in a piecemeal way. They need to muster support by revising the orthodoxy, right back to fundamental truths about the nature of existence.

Orthodoxy uses the same debating strategies again and again through the ages. The radical challenge also uses the same range of arguments against the established view, again and again. We can see how the political circumstances allocate the debating strategies.

Orthodoxy is of course concerned with protecting the established institutions and mainstream public morality. The doctrine of the establishment seeks to keep tradition and consensus together. Let us regard it as a central kind of power towards which protest and criticism are focused. It is unusual centre, but not necessarily centralized, an embodiment of custom and privilege. Over and against it lies a repressed or rejected periphery. In these conceptual borderlands harbouring the dispossessed and disaffected there are also the self-selected originals against the centre. In these terms we divide the whole of human society into those whose sense of community is for the centre and those who are against it. We notice how the centre sees the periphery as menacing, and how, seen from the border, the centre is repressive. The centre always drives its unfavourites out and holds them down, labelling them as unnatural perverts. When the border passively accepts the dishonouring labels, there is no dialogue within society. With a one-sided condemnation there is no heresy debate; we only find gypsies, outcasts, lower orders, as seen from the centre. When their voice is allowed to be heard, there will have to be a dialogue about the nature of man. This will take the usual form of debates between centre orthodoxy and border heterodoxy.

The orthodox strategy, when challenged, is to teach that human nature is naturally imperfect or incomplete in same way that only good institutions can cure. To realize the full human capacity for good, there must be recognition of the kind that the centre provides. The centre moves from this premise in the second, that the natural human is loyal to good institutions, and thence to the third premise, that the natural human learns in central passing impulses in favour of a stable hierarchy of ends. This doctrine implies a set of views about the fulfilment of human nature in social institutions, compatible with a centre programme for social stability and separation.

Normally any border revolt against the centre attacks the first principle, asserting as Pelagius did that humans are not latitally flawed and do not need institutions to achieve perfection. An alternative strategy for heretics is to define human nature as too hopelessly corrupt to be saved by the orthodox institutions: special drastic measures of sanctity require sectarian separateness, such as the heroic asceticism of the Albigensians and Cathars. Of course the opposition always enjoys more flexible strategies in argument than the establishment. You would think that so many heresies of human perfectibility and godliness had been denounced by the Catholic church when Luther led the Reformation that he could conceive of no new proposal for bypassing the sacerdotal centre officials. But simply asserting that corrupt human nature could only be saved by intervention of divine grace, spontaneous and direct, he effectively dispossessed with their claims. As Athanasius had earlier made clear, when Arius taught that all humans have direct unmediated access to God, any doctrine that allows the central institutions to be bypassed is subversive to the centre. It allows each person to join with like-minded fellows in a new sect of their own.

In the ages of orthodoxy there has always been a tendency to associate the heretic with the witch, the former the more deogerous pervert because the more articulate. Seen from the centre, the pride and envy of the pervert are overweening, his greed and lusts inordinate; his conduct demonstrates the very doctrines of original defect in human nature which condemn him. Worse, when the perverted human states his case, he can win normal human away from their natural allegiance. Orthodoxy tends to have a consistent theory of human imperfection, a theory of education and a theory of contagion. The young are exposed and vulnerable. Orthodoxy needs a theory of youthful weakness and seducibility to justify its educational methods and its segregating institutions. It needs insulation and strict education to incorporate the young into its institutions. So the heterodox theory must adopt an opposite stereotype of good and evil in human nature. Heterodoxy scoffs at insulating boundaries: nature has designed humanity on the open plan. According to heterodoxy the natural human being is sufficient in virtue, or perfectible in same way that denies the sacramental and educational theories of the orthodox; let us be free to fulfil our nature or let God be free to fulfil his design for us.

However, when the sectarian succeeds in setting up a separate domain, when the *locus* of authority is found within the sect, the same dilemma arises that confrants every opposition party when it gets power. The sectarian too needs to commit the young to sectarian institutions and needs to justify its repressive educational methods. It needs to segregate its members. There are some insulating boundaries it cannot scuff at. So it is that the sects founded on creeds of saving grace or human innocence take an even more severe view of training the young than the orthodoxy they otherwise oppose. I quote the Hutterite educationist's metaphor: ". . . when the wine press crushes each tender berry, each in turn yields all its juice and strength . . . if any single berry escapes the press and is not crushed, but retains its own strength and form, it belongs not in the wine, for it is unworthy, useless and cast out." (Andrews Ehrenpraisz.) Sectarian control of youth is usually strict. Sometimes the heterodox educationist works on a very small scale, in his own school, like Tolstoy or Rabindranath Tagore. Otherwise the typical border doctrines of human innocence are only turned into proposals for education itself, where the heterodox preachers never expect to work real institutions, but only to write about them, like Rousseau, Emerson and Thoreau.

To sum up, at the border sincerity is the most esteemed virtue, hypocrisy the worst vice. The border puts the burden of its dialogue with the centre on its rejection of artificial and arbitrary institutions. The dialogue leads the border to preach some inborn latency for salvation which will not depend on institutional mediators. For the border all taboos are irrational, pollution from the border is impossible, for pollution is not in nature, but in social institutions. The role of the border is to defend natural relations between God and man; the word purity implies the Gordan of Eden. These themes are surely not so remote that we cannot recognize ourselves. Our current controversies about educability, sociobiology and inherited intelligence contain the same political dynamics as the old heresy debates. With us, no more than with our forbears, nature and purity are not technical terms: when the border uses them, the centre is being arraigned for causing pollution. When the centre uses them, a contagious border is being emotional off.

If we now consider our contemporary debate on purity of the environment, it shows features of the perennial argument between centre and border. It is like a heresy debate without heretics to be forced to recantation, or like a witchcraft trial without witches. It is depersonalized and desymbolized, since the structure of social symbols has been replaced by impersonal physical causes and results. There can be no attack on human perversion, because both political centre and political border speak from the same premises about the intrinsic goodness of humanity. Instead of humans being imperfect, incomplete, tainted creatures (the unusual orthodox view), even the centre now seems to agree that institutions are corrupting and people are good. The disappearance in our time of a distinctive orthodox view of human nature results from long cumulative effects in the democratic process. The centre has lost its voice. Democracy is founded on the right of the borders to state their case. Once granted, the case once heard is seductive and gains sympathy. The idea that, however misguided, individuals are entitled to a voice in the democratic process is a principle that emanates from the border. The argument about the rights of man comes to rest on the border assumption that humans are essentially good, fit for salvation, and rational. The arguing assumes, as in all heresy debates, that the concepts of natural rightness and wrongness do not rest on institutions or an local cultural premises, but on human reason. The orthodox view is undermined from the start of the debate. It is as if the centre which once agreed to the debate did not foresee that its particular institutions can never be defended by mere rationalism. In the history of Western culture, the centre has been led step by step during two centuries of democratic practice to abandon the age-old defence strategy. Now it accepts that people can only communicate, will agree on basic principles, symbolic taboos are broken, they stop communicating, political problems are simple; moral principles only to be stated to be irresistible, are in tragic dilemma.

These views represent major border strategies in the contemporary debates. From them some other order principles are derived. For example, all people are essentially good, the category of sexual pervert is empty; youth is healthy by nature and less contagious; contagion is unusual; but if contagion is true; pollution comes from social institutions and threatening urban life. The boundary between centre and border has changed unrecognizably but does not the quasi-judicial nature of the witch or heresy trial, as of individuals, social institutions such as the family are collectively tried without clear alternatives presented. In some places modern forms of civilization has not allowed the border-centre dialogue to develop. The more repressive the political system, the more significance is allotted in the ideas of the child pervert. Perversion means pollution. Sometimes a racial minority condemns the border subculture ladefinite tutelage and repression. Sometimes a concept of human excellence the centre to conflict with those who speak a clear border message.

This sounds like a simple process of trade-off between the concept of perverted human nature and the concept of corrupted institutions. In this perspective the current anxiety about pollution, the environment may have to do with the advance of technology and more to do with the decision process. There are two different ways in which industrial technology has developed. We now say that it is not technology as industrialism, but the social decisions we have made that lead to the discovering the essential properties of social institutions and so to conclusions Emerson's view that it be hardly to be expected that social life would flourish in the Garden of God.

Premises of tonality

By Christopher Wintle

HEINRICH SCHENKER :
Free Composition (Der Freie Satz) Translated by Ernst Oster
2 Volumes : 166 pp. and 158 pp. Longman. £19.95 the set.
0 582 28073 7

There can have been few events so eagerly awaited by both composers and musical academics as the appearance in English of Heinrich Schenker's *Der Freie Satz*. The book was first published (posthumously) in 1935, but has hitherto been available in translation only in a micro-film version by T. H. Krüger. The long wait has been well worth while. The late Ernst Oster's translation is marvellously comprehending, and his footnotes and cross-references are of immense value. It makes available a theoretical work that not only holds the key to Schenker's analytic studies, just a few of which are also available in English, but which is also in its own right the most important and challenging work on music theory of the century.

Although Schenker (1868-1935) worked in Vienna mainly as a private piano teacher, his scholarly work displayed an astonishing range. He was a leading proponent of unedited (Urtext) editions, and derived principles for performing practice from his study of autograph manuscripts. These principles were inextricably linked with analytic ones, which in turn presupposed a comprehensive knowledge of the repertory of tonal music, as well as of the more recent history of music theory. He championed almost exclusively the tonal composers "of genius"—Bach, Chopin, Brahms and, above all, Beethoven—at the expense of their contemporaries (he was a failed composer), about whom he could write with stinging abrasiveness. Indeed, he was heir to the main polemical traditions of the tonal era: in his attacks on the harmonic analysts he followed C. P. E. Bach (who had observed that "any and my deceased father's basic principles are contrary to Rameau's"), and Hanslick, by upholding Brahms in the face of programatic music and of Wagner's music drama.

It was, however, the polemic between Schenker and Schoenberg (symptomatically never mentioned by name here) that led to the emphasis placed in this book upon some of the most dramatic reformulations of traditional concepts. These emanated from Schenker's central promise, which was by now quite familiar. Schenker viewed it as his own Godsent mission to reveal how a "genuine theory of tonal language" should presuppose the identification of three essential structural levels. In the background stood the large-scale cadential motion of the piece of music. In the middle ground, a dozen or so techniques were available to transform and prolong this motion. In the foreground, these (and other) techniques could in themselves be easyplied to the middle-ground elements, with further recapitulations until every feature of the piece had been generated. The theory, which has inspired so many comparisons with transformational linguistics, presupposed, and decived something of its nature from, an intensive grounding in strict counterpoint and figured bass. It also necessitated a reinterpretation of traditional harmonic concepts, and offered perhaps the only rigorous scrutiny of the passage from strict to free composition. For all this, however, Schenker was, as Oster points out, still an empiricist, concerned with the individuality of tonal pieces as much as with their shared theoretic backgrounds.

Given these hierarchical views, within were extended to form and rhythm, it is not hard to understand Schenker's importance with Schoenberg's (and Riemann's) relatively monodimensional treatment of theme and motive. Schenker's relation of motive, parallelism, repetition and recurrence to the background cadential motion and its transformations, offers a much richer account of musical unities, even if, by comparison with his earlier writings, it emerges as a more one-sided one. But he paid penalties for his polemics: he did not always relate the tensions between stylistic characteristics and their immediate backgrounds; he did not explore the more complex syntaxes of tonal music; he adopted crude attitudes to the surface rhythms of metric foot; he rarely moved towards and music—a regrettable omission in view of the emphasis here from Beethoven and Brahms and his chauvinism played havoc with his sense of music history. Ironically, his central tenets were for more from the instrumental music of the Italian Baroque than from the German chorale, Huesler or Crüger.

None of these criticisms however detracts from Schenker's main principles, which are supported by so much in the great centrepiece sketches. In England, which unlike the United States, has no tradition of such theory, it will pose some problems of interpretation and presentation, not least because it has as well as graphic symbols. Its analysis presupposes great familiarity with time and preparation, and from point of view, as Schenker himself observed, its difficulty is in no defence. Some institutions have already taken to the challenge and the growing literature on Schenker suggests that no one concerned with tonal music can afford not to come to terms in one or another with these extraordinary, fascinating, and often profoundly moving, insights.

A welcome new edition of Salzer/Lockspeiser's classic *Structure in Hearing and Imagining* has recently been published (301pp. J. M. Dent. 0 460 03173 2). First published in 1936, and four times revised by the author, *Structure in Hearing and Imagining* has now been revised a fifth time by Graham Smith, a close friend of Lockspeiser, in accordance with Lockspeiser's research during the decades before his death in 1966. The bibliography has been entirely recast.

Full Measures

I

People sailing down the river
In wooden vessels between the magnificent trees,

Leafy cisterns of river standing in their own shadow
Like avenues of barrels in cool cellars

That grope up to feel green in the skies.
River flowing upwards from miraculous bottles

Of willow contentedly rowing the river to God;
The true source hovering, blinding white, over the mountains;

And it is moving with a note, like great brown lorries
Or goods trains rumbling full of water, though it is

Like one long amber room of sequent chambers
Sliding through each other, which are pulses

Echoed from the rainy source, the rocks
It bounds down, the turfs that hold, one long room

Broadening and full of sunlit motes
And reflecting echoes. Quantities have paused

To fill the trees, to construct shady paths
Before they flutter back to water in the large

Flat drops of autumn. Other water
Pauses in its stages like passengers

Passing in wooden vessels between magnificent trees.
The sky's bartender in blackening whitecoat

Prepares his biggest drops, full measures.

II

On the boat made out of trees I drink up beer
And hold it up to pledge the river; it matches,

It is mainly water, and stays a while in me
Rejoicing and transmitting visions

Of where it's been, some of which I see. The cream
Drinks at the river's mouth, the sky

Bends down to sup the waves, and water
Runs invisibly up the wind-ladder

Disclosing as it flies great ice-ships,
Snow-rigged, spunglass frigates, until it is too heavy,

Can go no further, and returns barking,
A great hound of thunder. And on the evening river

Under the leaves the water flies
In winged drops with a sticker drinking

Freely from all a special heavy beer
Fermented in our veins for generations
Travelling in our veins like walking rivers.

Peter Redgrove

Great circles

By Basil Greenhill

JEAN RANDIER :
Marine Navigation Instruments
256pp. John Murray. £17.50.
0 7195 3733 9

Lavishly produced and massively illustrated, with a great deal of colour work, this translation from the French publishes for the first time in an English language edition many drawings and photographs of French navigation instruments not previously seen. It also draws heavily on British sources, notably on the National Maritime Museum at Greenwich.

However, it is not entirely reliable. There are too many errors, inconsistencies in the captions to the illustrations upon which the book depends to convey much of its information. To take a few examples: on the dust-jacket is a colour illustration of a brass sextant, but the description in the caption has it as an octant; the object in the illustration on page 6 is described as a "sea compass" (whatever that is) but in fact an azimuth compass; in the caption to Figure 129 the Ramsden sextant at Greenwich is wrongly described; we are told in the caption to a coloured illustration of a terrestrial globe that W. J. Bleau started his production of commercial globes in 1633 and "From that date towards all Leighton Buzzard, a horizontal circle, which, in fact, Bleau produced globes from 1598 (the globe illustrated has the circles and is the Greenwich Mercator of 1541); "Premières Heures", a painting by Jacques Devaulx of Le Havre, is twice described as being of the fifteenth century, though in fact it is of the sixteenth—but it been of the fifteenth, the clear and detailed illustrations of three-masted ships would have been extremely interesting in their own right and should have been a matter of comment; the object captioned as a "Mariner's astrolabe" in Figure 94 has long been recognized as a surveying instrument altered to represent a mariner's astrolabe.

The errors in the text are perhaps more significant. There are too many careless statements. For example: "Until the end of the eighteenth century all long passages were made by dead reckoning"; in fact, many, perhaps most, long passages were made by running down the latitude (that is, by sailing a course to achieve the latitude of the destination across the ocean, identifying this latitude by observation of the sun and moon, and then running down the parallel of latitude until land was sighted). It is stated that Captain Sumner's "ecliptical position-line method of determining longitude became institutionalized in France within ten years of his first use of it in 1837" and that it was termed the "Marcq Saint-Hilaire method"; but Sumner published his position-line method in Boston in 1843 and Saint-Hilaire his in the *Revue Maritime* in 1875. In France it is known as the "méthode du point rapproché" in Britain as the "intercept" method. We are also told that the gimballed marine barometer first appeared at the beginning of the nineteenth century, but gimballed mercury marine barometers, both made by Nairne, were taken to sea by Phipps in 1773 and by Cook in 1768. And so on.

Islands in the sun

By Peter Norman

CLYDE HOSEIN :
The Killing of Nelson John
128pp. London Magazine Editions. £5.50.
0 904 388 34 4

Most of the stories in this, Clyde Hosein's first published work, are set in his native Trinidad; the remainder, for no very clear reason, are set in a fictitious neighbouring island, Paria. Hosein has lived in Canada for the last seven years, and much of the inspiration for these stories seems to lie in a deep nuetalgia for his homeland. While the style is generally spare and taut, almost every story breaks out once or twice into rich descriptions of the island's landscape, its climate, its flora and fauna.

These passages are by no means detrimental to the total effect; they add a pungent sense of milieu to what are, on the surface anyway, fairly slight pieces. Nor do they add up to a romanticized, "tourist-board" view of Trinidad: the country is seen, in the aftermath of colonial culture, as a place in deep decay. Its people are either losing their souls to the tacky materialism that is replacing traditional values, or else living on romantic dreams, hopelessly out of touch with reality and doomed to ignominious failure.

Occasionally their failure is seen as in some measure heroic—the old jeweller, for example, who vanishes after melting down and scattering to the crowd his hoard of precious metals, or the shocked innocent of "I'm a Presbyterian, Mr Kramer", who struggles to prevent the cynical sexual exploitations of his boss. Often, though, the failure is merely pathetic. Most pathetic of all, perhaps, are the protagonists of "The Sword" and "Partners", white descendants of the original British, French and Portuguese colonists who rejoice in such names as Ferdinand LeGoise LeBlanc and Blake St John Tofnell. Their particular pipe-dream is to return to an imagined former glory by reclaiming the land, but they lack the resources—financial, intellectual and moral—to make a success of it.

One of the legacies of colonialism, Trinidad's rich ethnic and religious mix, is well represented. Many of the characters are Indian, both Muslim and Hindu, and there are Christians both black and white, non-conformist and Catholic. Their co-existence, sometimes peaceful, sometimes spiced with petty antagonisms, is a rich source of irony and pathos, the latter notably in Hosein's opening story about his illiterate mother, which has an authentic autobiographical ring.

The majority negro population of Trinidad rarely appear as individuals; they are generally seen only as furtive guerrillas, as illicit dealers in "ganja", or as an angry mob chanting Black Power slogans. The one significant exception is Morris, of "Morris, Bhadya", who is atypical of the "African" population in having grown up as "an island in a sea of Indians", and who finds himself torn between his cultural and racial allegiances. Hosein's sympathy and interest clearly lie with the individual misfit, the misfit who has no coherent cultural identity. Typical of such characters is "Bianca", a poor white who is abused as an oppressor because of her colour, but who steadfastly refuses to follow her relatives into exile in Canada.

There is a curious lack of modernity about all the stories. The Islands's colonial history is omnipresent, of course, but there is an absence of distinctive detail that would identify the period as the 1970s. Even the aspiring pop singer of "Crow" spends his time crooning, at weddings, "I Believe", "Be my Love" or "What have all the Flowers Gone", and it comes as a mild shock when a "rasta-haired man" turns up in one story. Perhaps it is unfair to use such a biographical snippets against him, but one cannot help wondering whether Hosein's seven years' absence from Trinidad may have caused him to be slightly out of touch with contemporary life there. It seems a pity the stories are not as firmly fixed in time as they are in place.

High and low

By Jennifer Kavanagh

CARYL BRAHMS :
Stoganov In Company
288pp. Robson Books. £7.50.
0 86051 103 0

PATRICIA ZELVER :
A Man of Middle Age
219pp. Hamish Hamilton. £6.95.
0 241 10484 X

Readers who have been introduced to the eccentric world of Vladimir Stroganov in Caryl Brahms's previous work will welcome her new collection of stories. We are straight away plunged into the intrigues of his execrable ballet company: the prima donna, the Definitive Defector, the ubiquitous ballet-mamouskus, and, of course, Madame Arankaya herself: "the formidable *Maître-de-ballet*, as she was wont to describe herself; 'Maîtresse, c'est autre chose'."

The Stroganov stories have a richness and depth of characterization lacking in the stories from the following two "In Company" sections. These pick at the foibles of society, past, present, and abroad. Like the revue sketches with which Miss Brahms made her name, they are brief, witty, and open-ended, but although the writing is succinct and the dialogue piquant, the result is sometimes lacking in humour. Too often Caryl Brahms's undoubted verve and wit seem to be applied to little purpose. One can take only so much whimsy, and little non-stories such as the exposition of the essential qualities of French women, or the revelations of the nine-year-old Queen of Portugal's true childish colours when she falls over and bursts into tears, tell us, although charmingly, nothing new.

Miss Brahms is at her best when most outrageous: when mingling ghosts and mortals above and below stairs in the great house of Lyttletown ("depriving ladies, with or without heads"), or when describing in the last occupric detail such characters as Cantodine, Lady Murgatroyd, who leads the life of a perfectly decadent Victorian lady—but only during the hours of night (her social calls are made at 4 am).

The "Chekhov" stories, developed from ideas jotted down in the playwright's notebooks, are quieter, more conventional, less densely written. They are nonetheless impressive in their evocation of another era and in their tribute to a more serious and formal art.

Patricia Zelver's first collection of stories is less wide-ranging. Pinning her characters for the most part in small-town Oregon and the—presumably fictitious—suburb of Vista Verde, she uncovers the hidden principles and ambitions of little men and women as they battle against the smothering ordinariness of suburban life. Thus Mrs Jessup dreams of a hospitable "Little Pub" round the corner which she knows the Vista Verde residents would never allow to exist.

Earl C. Bennet in his shack café thinks that the big event in his life has finally come when he discovers a half-mouse in his tub of oleomargarine: it is his one opportunity to get back at the anonymous Big Shots of America, and he rejects every settlement that his army of lawyers can achieve.

Less extreme and more successful are the dreams of Sam Winkle, the "Man of Middle Age" of the title novelle. His daughter has left home, his place in the office is no longer secure, and the vulgarity of his new neighbours is a continual irritation. It is only when he realizes that his life so far has been misdirected that his existence takes a new turn—not a new theme, but told here with humanity and moderation.

The points made in some of these stories are indeed banal, but there is occasionally a telling severity, poignancy or skill in authorial view. There is, too, a sense of proportion, a recognition that importance has little objective meaning. Little men Zelver's characters may be, but their dreams are grand ones.

Out of the earth

By Jane Bryce

BEN OKRI :
Flowers and Shadows
272pp. Longman. £1.25.
0582 643 015

Flowers and Shadows is a first novel by a young Nigerian of nineteen. A striking feature of the book is its sureness of touch, the self-confidence with which the artistic hurdles both characterization and events. Above all, the language reflects a keen ear for the cadences of speech, whether pidgin or standard English.

Some aspects of the setting are familiar from such novels as *Violence*, by another young Nigerian author, Festus Iyayi: squalor, filth and poverty reduce the inhabitants of Lagos's poorer quarters to despair, yet ultimately refine them. Okri spares us no detail of the smells, the jostling for buses, the excreta in the gutters, the clamour of the maimed, begging for coins. These details emerge as the physical corralative of the social reality of Lagos, the mental violence practised by the powerful, the dog-eat-dog struggles for political and financial survival. The whole is the curse, and in the face of such poverty luxury is a flagrant denial of humanity. The two are skilfully juxtaposed in passages such as the description of a Lagos gin-shop, in all its confusion, from the interior of a chauffeured, air-conditioned limousine.

The experience of the darker side of Lagos life seems at first sight a long way from that of the protagonist, Jeffia, a young man who has arrived at the ante-chamber of his childhood dreams", and "Poverty" is prayed as the pampered child of a rich man. The dialogue of *Innocence and Experience* is, however, made explicit in Jeffia's realization that his peace of mind is founded on the ruthlessness of his father, Jonas. Perhaps because the author's attention is concentrated on this process of revelation, coincidences and violent deaths proliferate, and the description almost loses its way at the moment of impact between the two sets of Jeffia's father and his uncle.

This is no way impairs the mood of the whole, however. Many such contrasts are present in the substructure of the book. The title *Flowers and Shadows* encapsulates this dualism. Jeffia's mother, whose life has been spent in the role of the creative artist, has a geotiness of spirit which is directly in conflict with her husband's violent nature. Jonah's character is ringed with darkness: the childhood of poverty from which he can escape only through power and money is hinted at in his native manicheism, juju worship, his family's belief in witchcraft, and even his wielding of the decorative Hausa sword in murderous rage towards his brother.

The sins of the father are visited on the son. This starkly biblical message is enacted in the novel, but the flowers survive, albeit sickly and stunted. Cynthia, the young woman whose history is unknowingly interwoven with Jeffia's, stands as a reminder of hope throughout. A flower growing in tragic soil, her love transforms the final scenes of squalor so that the book ends on a note of triumphant optimism. The beautiful ones are born, though their beauty is both obscured and tempered by the shadow of society's evils. Drawing inspiration from its own culture, Okri's is a voice which speaks so that other outsiders, and promises to be one worth listening to.